



When Doves Cry by [harleyquinn2587](#)

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Romance, Supernatural

Language: English

Characters: Billy H., OC

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-07-17 23:12:44

Updated: 2019-11-04 01:02:05

Packaged: 2019-12-12 14:40:52

Rating: M

Chapters: 13

Words: 26,589

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Anastasia Bradshaw was a small, feisty, and determined woman. So when the love of her life disappears not once, but twice on her, she'll do anything to get him back.

1. Chapter 1

July 4, 1985 Long Beach, California

Anastasia Bradshaw woke with a start. There seemed to be a fire burning in her lungs and her heart was beating rapidly. Her slowly waking mind told her this was fear she was experiencing. Ani began slowly trying to regulate her breathing while quickly shifting through any other emotions she could be feeling in that moment.

What the fuck is going on? she wondered while still tapped into the fear gripping her chest.

Glancing at the alarm clock on the bedside table, she noted it wasn't well into the morning as she expected. She didn't remember falling asleep, but knew it hadn't been that long ago as the clock read 10:40 PM. She also realized she hadn't been dreaming before she woke suddenly.

"Odd, I haven't felt anything like that in months. The last time was..." her whispers trailed off as the red lights began flashing in her mind.

Closing her eyes, she began to mentally retreat into her mind. She quickly found the thickest and strongest tether in her emotional range. By the time her mental self-had grasped the tether, her body fell limp back onto her bed. Unconsciously, she pushed her long chestnut hair out of her face as if to help her see clearing. In her mind, Ani began to 'walk' the length of the tether going hand over hand down the length. It was longer than the last time she took a walk along this particular one.

He's gotten further from me. How did I not see this one coming? I could still feel him... panic replaced the fear in her heart. *This could be where the fear came from. What if he gave up on me? What if he didn't wait?*

It took what felt like hours before the tether finally started getting thinner. Ani knew this was the end of the line. Suddenly, she hit the blunt end of the length and stopped her mental route to him. Looking around, her eyes landed on a different version of the boy, no make that man, she knew better than herself. The hair was the same, the

eyes hadn't changed, and yet the face was different. This was a man who had endured things he should not have had to. Sure, he was still the most beautiful person she had ever seen, but the expression she wore was not one she was used to.

Eyebrows knitted together; Ani opened her mouth to call out to him. Before she could get the words out, his head turned towards hers and their eyes met. He opened his mouth and the words tumbled out before she could speak.

"Help me. Hurry. I don't have much time."

Without walking the line of the tether back, Ani snapped her eyes open with yet another gasp and heavy breathing. Calming herself as best as she could, she reached under her bed and grabbed her duffle bag. Not bothering to glance at garments, Ani began stuffing essentials into the bag. Changing from her shorts and favorite t-shirt, she reached for the phone on her bedside table. It was ringing before her hand could lift it from its cradle.

"Six? Is that you?"

"Ani, he's in Indiana. Some shit town in the middle of nowhere. Hawkins? Fuck if I know but that's what One picked up. It took him weeks to pin point him based on how far you said the tether was *not* based on emotional distance. Do you have *any* idea what you owe us?!"

"Fuck, Six. I'm sorry. Look, I appreciate it. I'll leave my tips from last night and the night before for you guys under the rock in the backyard. Can you feed my cat while I'm gone?" Ani frantically grabbed her shoes from the bottom of her closet. Her hands were shaking so badly, the laces didn't seem to want to tie together into neat eye yet loose knots she had perfected over the years.

Hawkins, Indiana? What kind of small-town hell is he living in? God, if Neil ruined him at all he's going to get a visit from Six. Fuck, where are my keys?!

"Ani... Two... we'll take care of Fiona. I know this isn't the time, but it's good to hear you like this."

"Like what? Scared and unable to function?"

"No. You sound scared sure. But there's hope under that fear. Hope that he really is there. That he's ok and you'll be reunited. Look, I called a few of your usual types of places for while you're out there. There's a place right in that town that's looking for good help. I did the normal feelers and when it felt right, I sent a good dose of assurance with my praises for my most popular employee. They're expecting you the Friday after next for an interview at 10 in the morning. I forget the name but call me when you get to the town and I'll have the name by then. Use what you've got to get the job."

"Six...I don't know how to repay you. I promise I'll call. Thank you. Thank One for me, okay? I'll be fine. Keep the lines open, and I mean all of the lines. Something feels off this time. Something isn't right about that town."

"We're good, Ani. Go, hurry. We love you. Come home safe to us."

Before Ani could reply, Six ended the call. She reminded herself to kill Six for using her name...*That Name*...how many times had she asked that they all use the name she had chosen. But that wasn't true, He had chosen it for her. When they were just 13 years old and she had suddenly appeared on the beach one day with One and Six in tow. Snorting, she pushed the memory to the back of her mind while grabbing her keys from the bowl on the kitchen table. She slipped around the front of the house, and hid the promised money under her normal hiding place. Ani locked the house up tight before pulling the car cover off her car. The inside smelt of him even after so many months. Leather, Marlborough's, peppermint, and his cologne. Breathing in she let the tear fall slowly down her cheek before turning over the ignition and backing out of the driveway. Driving how he taught her, she pushed down on the gas pedal and made her way to the interstate.

Days later, Steve Harrington would swear that the shortest and feistiest woman he had ever seen would come barreling down the street at a speed that would have stopped Billy Hargrove in his tracks. He thanked God that he was walking on the edge of the road and could push the kids further into the grass. The red Shelby GT500

screached to a halt a quarter of a mile away from them. The door swung open and shapely legs in the shortest shorts he had ever seen swung out of the driver's side. The gravel crunched under Doc Martens as the stranger hurried towards them.

Lifting his eyes to assess the stranger, he couldn't make out a face past the stylish Ray-Bans. What he did make out, was Max breaking away from the group and run to the woman only feet away from them now. Steve took two steps and called out to Max to stop.

"Ani!" Max threw her arms around this woman's neck tightly. For only being fourteen, she was already a whole head taller than the woman clutching her just as tightly.

Steve made it the two as they both pulled back. He watched Ani lift her hands to Max's face, wiping the tears off the younger girl's face. Max lifted the sunglasses off Ani's nose and slide them onto the top of her head. Concern was evident in her features, but quickly changed to distrust when she swung impossibly blue eyes onto Steve's face.

"Where is he?" her voice was girly, yet low and dangerous.

"Where's who? Who are you? You could have killed us?" he gestured between himself, Max, and the group of boys and Eleven standing just feet behind him on the side of the road. Glancing back at kids, he almost snorted at the looks on the boys' faces while their eyes were rapidly taking in the inches of sun kissed skin on the stranger still holding Max in her arms.

"Where is *he*?" she asked again, impatience lacing her words. "Hargrove. Where the fuck is Billy Hargrove?"

Steve swore later that he got whiplash from the speed his head swung back to the woman in front of him. Heart hammering in his chest, he took a deep breath before speaking

"He's gone, Ani. On the Fourth. There was a fire at the mall. He had broken in for some stupid reason and he...he..." Max spoke before Steve could even get a word in.

"He's not dead, Maxi. He was there a few days ago. I followed the

tether. I should have followed yours too. His is bigger and easiest for me to follow. He's not dead." Ani looked up at the girl she considered a kid sister and saw the hope flash in her eyes before she felt it rolling off of Max in waves.

"How do you know? We watched the fire. And just what the hell is a tether?" Steve didn't understand what was going on. This girl came out of nowhere and was asking for Hargrove just days after his death? Something wasn't adding up.

"She's special, Steve. Like El. She can feel emotions, and do some other things. She can feel Billy's feelings the strongest and is connected to him through his emotions." Max explained.

"And cut the shit. I know there wasn't fire. I know all about what things you kids may have seen in this shitty little town. Better than all of you do. Better than that one over there in the pink. You're El, kid?" El nodded shyly. A kid with a mop of unruly black hair stepped next to the girl and slide his hand into hers. She was briefly reminded of her younger self holding onto a blonde-haired boy's hand. "We'll talk, El. I think I can help you."

Steve took a step closer to this Ani chick and grabbed her by her elbow. Yanking her away from Max, he hissed at her quietly, "I still don't know who you are. I promised to keep these kids safe, and I've done a pretty damn good job of it. Who are you? Why are you looking for that asshole?"

Ani gripped Steve's fingers before flinging the offending appendage off of her arm. Smiling as sweetly as she could, she hissed back, "*That asshole* is important to me, shithead. Who am I? I used to be the love of Billy Hargrove's life. We'd been in love with each other since we were 13. I need to know where the body that looked like Billy died. I need to see it."

Along with the whiplash, Steve would also tell Nancy Wheeler and Jonathan Byers that the shock of hearing the hottest girl he'd ever seen say she had been in love with Hargrove could have possibly killed him.

Author's Notes:

Hello! I'm not exactly new to this. I've written fic before. Got rid of the only one on this account because it wasn't something I was proud of. I had also lost interest in the work a long time ago so I just stopped working on it. This however, I'm already immensely proud of. I have notes and a rough idea of where this is going so please be patient. I hope to update again in a few days so we'll see how things go. Thanks for stopping in and please review!

2. Chapter 2

Ani decided that standing in the middle of the road was eventually going to be the worst idea of her life. Meeting Max's eyes across the short distance, she motioned to her car with her chin. Max looked between Ani and her friends trying to decide whether to go with Ani or stay and walk with the Party. Ani sighed when it dawned on her this was going to be harder than she originally thought.

"Woah, where do you think you're taking her?" Steve asked in a clipped tone.

"I told you, pretty boy. I'm going to go get Billy back. Honestly, were you dropped on your head as a baby?"

A tall black boy made his way out of the group and placed himself at Max's elbow. He leaned into her ear and began whispering so no one could hear him. Max turned red before meeting Ani's eyes with a look of panic.

Oh my God, she's dating that boy. Christ, Billy must have had a heart attack... Ani watched the scene before her with wide eyes. She looked to the one Max called Steve, silently asking for confirmation.

"Ani, this is Lucas. He's my...well, he's my boyfriend," Max hesitantly told Ani.

Steve had dropped her elbow only to grab it again. He looked as if he wanted to diffuse a situation before it even happened. Ani held up a hand in his face and smiled at the boy next to Max. The panic coming off Steve instantly disappeared.

"Look, I can only take so many in my car. How far are you guys walking to? It seems I won't be able to take my favorite side kick with me so I can meet you somewhere."

The smallest boy of the whole lot stepped forward, "My house is just down the road. The last name on the mailbox says Byers. My brother is home right now. When you get there could you let him know we're on our way?"

"Kid, I'll drive slowly next to you guys. There's something you guys aren't telling me and waiting for answers out here is getting old fast. And I'd rather do this as privately as possible. Have you checked your house for bugs?"

"Like roaches and spiders?"

"No, like cameras and microphones."

Byers nodded in confirmation. That was all Ani needed to be sure they at least knew about them. When she didn't feel anything other than confusion or relief coming from the group around her, she turned on her heels and walked back to her car. She waited until they had resumed their walk before shifting into gear and slowly making her way down the road.

A few miles later, the kids pulled down a dirt path. Just beyond the driveway, Ani could see a modest house in need of some repairs. It wasn't as dilapidated as the houses in California she had spent most of her adolescence squatting in with One and Six, but it was familiar in its current state. She noticed Steve glancing her way and felt him attempting to get a read on her reaction. She parked the car in front of the small porch and climbed out of her car. She leaned back into the driver's side, reaching across to the passenger seat. She stood up, pulling on a too familiar leather jacket. Ani could feel the hesitation and confusion rolling off Steve in waves.

"It was his when we were younger. One day it fit him perfectly. The next day I woke up and he was taller and had put on more muscle than I could imagine he could have ever had. I was older but a few months and didn't attend school like he did. I worked. Bought him the same one in his new size the next day and he passed this one onto me. It still smells like him. My car smells like him. Hell, my house smells like him and he never set foot in my current place. I still remember that boy and how he looked. I have trouble matching that boy with the man who left me behind. I couldn't even tell you when he really became a man. It was like one day, there was the boy I met and the next there was the man I couldn't live without," Ani smiled in Steve's direction. He knew she was remembering someone he knew he had never met.

"I can't understand this at all. You come out of nowhere. You and Max are telling me that you and Hargrove are, what? Childhood sweethearts. The way you speak about him is crazy. I can't imagine someone loving him and then I hear it in your voice. I don't get it."

"You don't have to. Come on," she beckoned him to the porch where the kids were slowly filing into the small home. "I deserve to know what happened before I go looking for Billy. You and those kids deserve to know the truth about me and why the shit that happened here happened."

Jonathan and Nancy had just as much trouble understanding as Steve did. On the one hand, Nancy could see how there's always someone for everyone; but on the other she couldn't understand who the Billy Hargrove Ani remembered was. Jonathan and Steve shared mutual looks of confusion and jealousy that someone like Hargrove could get a woman that looked like this (not that Jonathan would ever let Nancy find out). The kids accepted everything they were told. They had seen far more than the adults in the room (not including Ani). It also helped that Max confirmed the parts of Ani's story that she knew from firsthand information. In return, the kids explained Billy's sudden change beginning with all that happened in the past year. When they finished, Ani asked Jonathan to use the Byers' phone. She held her hand over her mouth before calling Six.

Steve motioned for the living room with his head. When Dustin went to follow, he shook his head and told the kids just the three of them if they would please wait. The kids watched as Steve began gesturing wildly with his arms, while Nancy held onto Jonathan's hand and interrupted frequently.

"What are they doing?" a voice behind Dustin startled him so much he squeaked.

"They're deciding if they trust you. You do know we don't know where exactly Billy is right? I mean, the body you say wasn't his. It was buried a few days ago." The one named Mike thrust his chin out as if expecting Ani to argue.

"I don't need his body, small fry. I need to see where it happened, and I need his car. I need to be able to feel him to know where he was

going after things changed."

Jonathan spoke up from the living room, "How can you feel him? I get that you have some thing with emotions but feel him?"

"I can feel him through the emotional bond he and I shared. I can also feel by touching things that were his. When this Mind Flayer you guys talk about killed the body that looked like Billy, he only killed a small part of Billy. It killed the smallest thing it could use to make that Billy clone. His body is still out there, so is his soul. I just need to bring one back to the other."

Nancy looked sick at the idea of bringing Billy Hargrove back to life. She never liked him, but it didn't mean he didn't deserve to die. She worried what this would do to the town, to his dad and stepmom, and Max. Poor Max looked scared and excited about bringing her stepbrother back. She spoke up before the two men in front of her could stop her.

"I'll take you. I know where his car is. We can't get into the mall just yet. It's still closed because of the fire the lab started to cover everything up. But I know where his car is."

"Wicked. Grab your stuff. I'll be in the car." Ani turned and started making her way to the door. Max flew from her chair, grabbing Ani by the shoulder. "Maxi, hey, hey now. Stop that. I can do this. I promise. Its just going to be tough for a few days. His body will need to heal itself. I'm not leaving until I know he's perfectly ok." She wiped more tears from Max's face today than she had in the two years she knew the younger girl before the move. Max nodded at Ani and moved to sit back down with her friends.

"I'll go with you. You'll need someone to help get Hargrove in the car if he's unconscious."

"Thanks, Jonathan. I appreciate it."

The three got in the car and as Nancy directed Ani to the correct route to the Hargrove-Mayfield residence, Jonathan let out a low whistle. Ani looked in the rearview, a smirk playing on her lips.

"You like it?"

"What year is this? Is this an '84?" Ani nodded before letting out a giggle. "If you lived in a lab like El and escaped from it when you were 13. How did you afford this?"

"I can manipulate emotions as well as feel them. I can use those emotions to get clients to pay larger fees than they normally would. This baby I got at a discount. Seemed like the owner at the dealership just couldn't say no to me."

Nancy looked over the back of her seat at Jonathan. 'Client?' she mouthed, only earning a shrug in response. Turning back to the front, she quickly pointed out the house at the end of the street. In the driveway sat the car Ani knew like the back of her hand. Her mind flooded with memories of stolen kisses, hands on thighs, and moans laced with words that would make your hair curl. Ani pulled over out of the line of sight of the front door. Ducking out of her own car, she made her way to the blue Camaro sitting cold in the drive. Opening and closing her hands a few times, she placed her hands on the hood and closed her eyes. Nancy and Jonathan shared a look when they past the ten-minute mark Jonathan had dutifully kept for Nancy. Ani back away from the car only to stop and take a few steps forward again. Nancy felt her heart reach out to the other woman as she watched Ani kiss her fingertips before placing them on the hood.

Ani sat back in the driver's seat taking low, shallow breaths. Nancy reached out and touched her shoulder. "Are you okay? Do you need anything?"

"No. We're going back to the Byers'. It's getting dark and I can't help him at night. I can reach out and check on him from the house before I check myself into the closest motel."

"You can stay with me. I can tell my folks' you're a friend from school or work or something."

"Do I look like a school friend, Nancy? Look at my clothes. Look at my tattoo," Ani pulled up the left sleeve of her jacket. On her wrist was an intricate elephant with a flower motif throughout its body. Hidden in the flowers was her identifier, a solid 002. "I'm not the

type of girl your parents would be comfortable with. Thanks for the offer, but I'll get a motel. Now can one of you tell me how to get to the Brimborn Steel Works?"

Author's Notes

Hello! First and foremost, I would like to thank everyone who took the time to follow this story: **grim assassin sherlock101**, **XXArmageddonXX**, **Nicolekal1023**, **ThornRose16**, and **vivelaine**. You made my day today with every notification of your follows!

I feel like this chapter got a tad rambling. Please let me know if anyone feels the same. I can fix it to make it better for you guys! Thanks a bunch for stopping in!

3. Chapter 3

Max and El sat at the table when the boys ran to the windows at the sound of Ani's car pulling back down the drive way. They could hear whispers among them about how the woman looked and how she seemed tough. Max snorted, knowing that Ani had to be tough to escape from the lab in Long Beach and then spend the next four years as Billy's other half. Her beauty was just a bonus to help with her bailies. Those two had been inseparable in those years together. The move affected Ani as much as it did Billy and Max. El caught Max's eye and smirked at the boys. The girls seemed to share the knowledge that if Ani were to bring Billy back, he wouldn't be too happy with any of them staring for too long.

"He'll kill Steve the second he finds out how Steve was checking her out," Max giggled to El making the other girl laugh as well. "I hope she's right. I hope she can bring him back. I know he was an asshole to all of you and especially me, but he really wasn't like that all the time. The move out here changed him. I think leaving her changed something in him."

"Is that why he hated Lucas?"

"I don't know. Maybe," Max shrugged before smiling over at the boys. "Come on, let's go see what's up."

The knob began to turn before the two girls could get out of their seats. Jonathan walked in, followed by Nancy. From a distance, Ani came in the door. She was shaking and white. Max couldn't tell if it was fear or rage taking over her almost big sister. The kids all moved out of the way for Ani to make it across the house and sit heavily in a chair at the table. She placed her hands on the table, finger tips touching, and took a shuddering breath.

"How much of an asshole did he become Max?" Ani never looked up from her hands when she spoke.

Max didn't know how to respond. Looking to the boys for help, Mike stepped forward and explained that he was unpleasant from the beginning but became verbally and almost physically abusive to

everyone around him. Mike told Ani how he would start fights with everyone. He even told her about the night Max had to drug him to stop him from killing Steve and Lucas. Max watched Ani lift a hand to her cheek and wipe away a tear.

"That's not Billy. The fighting, yes. Attempted murder no. I can't explain where that came from but that's not him."

Steve wandered into the room to see the three other adults had returned, "Did I miss something?"

Jonathan rolled his eyes, "Why don't you take the kids home? Especially Max. I don't know if it's good for her to be here right now."

Steve nodded and rounded up everyone but El and Will. Max hugged Ani one last time, whispering in her ear to contact her on Will's walkie talkie if she needed her.

"I'm going to need quiet. What I need to do isn't difficult or dangerous. But if something draws my focus away I won't be able to go back in until I've calmed down. It's taken me days to get this far. I don't think I'm calm enough after touching that car."

"You can use my room if you want?" Jonathan nodded down the hall, "It's the only one that doesn't look like a preteen lives in it. Or a single adult woman."

Nodding, Ani made her way down the hall, opening doors until she found the one she guessed was Jonathan's. Locking the door behind her, she moved to sit on the bed. Drawing in a deep breath, she let out the silent sob she had been holding since leaving Billy's car. It had taken everything in her to place that kiss on the hood. The first jolt of emotion and raw feeling she got from the cold metal had twisted her stomach. The second one, sealed with her kiss, nearly put her on her knees. She felt the girls who had been in the backseat with Billy. First, she felt herself. Then the others came through, strongly because those girls felt like they would be the one to ensnare the elusive California Dreamboat.

Honestly, who would even call him that? He'd make whoever even thought it wish they hadn't.

And pulled the hairband from her wrist and pulled her hair into a loose ponytail. Channeling her anger, as I laid back on the bed and closed her eyes. Almost instantly, she reached her emotional range. Quickly finding the right tether, she walked just had she had days prior, hand over hand but at a much quicker pace. She knew closing the physical distance between herself and Billy would allow the tether to lose length. It was minutes later she reached the end of the line. She looked around and found Billy much like she saw him the last time. He was seated this time, on the blackness that was the link between their minds. He looked up as she approached him from the end of the tether.

"You came back. Where are you? Where am I?"

"You're in your own mind. I used our link to come to you. I'm in Hawkins. I came to return you to yourself."

"What happened to me?"

"I don't know, handsome. I just know that I've learned somethings that I don't like. Things like sluts in the back seat of the Camaro...*our* backseat. I thought I felt things coming through the link from you that I only ever felt when we were fucking, but I thought I was crazy and missing you."

Blushing, Billy looked down. When he raised his dark blues to her own lighter shade, he was sheepishly grinning at her. "I'm sorry."

"Not as sorry as you're going to be when I return you to your damn body. And even though you'll forget me telling you this, you won't remember any of this. So, when I remind you again, I'll have had more time to come up with ways to make you pay."

"As usual, I only understand half of what you're saying because I feel like I'm just sleeping. But for now, I've got it, Hot Stuff."

Pointing her finger in his face, "Don't you 'Hot Stuff' me, William Hargrove. I'm in no mood. I touched your car not even an hour ago. You won't be able to hide it from me when you get back because I'm going to touch it again in front of you. Now for God's sake, I'm going back to my own mind and body, going to actual sleep, and figure out

where your stupid, ridiculous, beautiful ass is. I'm stuck working with a bunch of *kids*, some goody-two-shoes names Nancy, some oddly accepting guy named Jonathan, and some pretty boy named Steve. Who, by the way, is the weirdest and dumbest mother hen I've ever seen? And he won't stop staring at my legs for the life of him."

Billy looked down at her bare legs, "I can't blame him...but I'm going to fuck up his face again if you remind me of this conversation when I wake up. If this is all real. I don't even believe this isn't a dream. In the years we were together you never told me you could do this. I didn't know anything about a link."

Shit, I never told him I linked us together that night. Hell, maybe he'll really forget that part when he wakes up. I already told him he'll forget this and think it's a dream.

"I'm going back. I'll see you as soon as I possibly can," leaning up towards his face, she grabbed the back of his neck to pull him down for a kiss. She ducked around his expectant face to place a chaste, and out of character, kiss on his cheek. "I love you, but I don't have to like you right now, Billy."

She picked up the end of the tether and made her way back to her body. She reached the platform she considered the start of the range and took a deep breathe before opening her eyes. Blinking to adjust to the low light provided by open blinds and a setting sun, she climbed off the bed and stumbled her way out of the room. She passed Jonathan and Nancy sitting on the couch. Making her way to her car, she opened the passenger side and opened the glove box. Reaching under a pile of papers, she grabbed the pack of cigarettes she kept stashed. Lighting one, she laid on the hood of her car and took a deep drag. Grimly, she looked at the etched elephant on the side of the silver lighter.

I swear to God I'm going to kill him. I'm going to put his stupid mind back in his stupid head and then I'm going to remind him of what he did and didn't do as I stab him to death.

Author's Notes:

Hello! I'm glad to see some new names to our list of followers. Welcome! Big thanks to **NicoleKat1023** and **Nicki Lynn** for the follows. Thank you to those who favorited as well! You guys are really making my day.

With that being said, I'm updating on a daily basis at this point. I am trying to at least get a few chapters ahead so I can continue this since my work schedule can odd. I don't know how long this story will end up being. I mean, in one chapter we went from the day the Billy clone died two days later and Ani is in Hawkins. I'm hoping to flesh this out more and make it a good long one. I hope you guys are enjoying it and I hope I can continue to entertain you with this story.

Until next time...

4. Chapter 4

Closing the door behind her, Ani threw her bag on one of the two double beds. The closest motel to the Byers' house had been just a few streets over. The owner at the desk had stared at her a little too hard, but she was used to it. Ani looked longingly at the second bed but made her way to the bathroom, stripping her clothes off as she went.

Stepping under the scolding water, Ani allowed her mind to wander. The whole situation she found herself in was peculiar. In just one week, she found herself in the small town her lover had seemingly ditched her for. She was relying on a bunch of preteens and their older siblings or weird older friend for help. In one day, she learned of the other girls Billy had been with. She wondered if Max would betray her stepbrother's trust and tell Ani about them. She knew Max would, she always like Ani more than her brother.

Leaning her head against the tile, she raised her fist and punched the wall. Pain bloomed across her knuckles as tears filled her eyes. She had never cried so much in her life. Billy had taught her to be tough and not let anything hurt you. But here she was crying over the same man who should never have hurt her in the first place. The pain in her hand was blinding, but it was nothing compared to the heartbreak she was feeling. Anything beat the crushing weight of despair she felt building in the pit of her stomach, and she contemplated punching the wall again. After spending her entire life feeling out other people's emotions and manipulating them when needed, feeling her own emotions roller coaster was unpleasant. It brought back too many memories of being in the lab in Long Beach. She couldn't stop the onslaught of memories of Dr. Brenner that kept playing out in her mind. She was grateful when he was transferred out of the lab but would forever remember that asshole, and the things, he made her do.

Ani turned off the taps and grabbed a towel from the towel rack. Wrapping it around herself, she grabbed a second to wrap her hair up in. Ani walked out into the bedroom, picking up Billy's old jacket on the way. Reaching into the pocket, she pulled out the paper with the

list of phone numbers Nancy wrote down for her. Flipping it over, she read the instructions Will gave her for the spare walkie talkie she absently pulled from her bag. Turning it on, she dialed the correct channel and took a deep breath.

"Mad Max this is Two. Mad Max this is Two. Do you read me?" Ani rolled her eyes at the ridiculous sentence Will all but forced her to read. She could barely breathe and the static from the walkie was slowly giving her a headache. After several minutes, the walkie crackled to life.

"Two this is Mad Max. I copy. Are you ok? Did you reach him?"

"Yes, I did. I'll need supplies before I attempt to reach him. Would the Ice Princess or Hair King be better to assist?"

A mad cackle came through the walkie and a third voice joined in their conversation, "This is Gold Leader, and I'm so telling him you called him that. Where did you hear that from anyway?"

Smirking, Ani raised the walkie one last time. "Ice Princess. I'll give him a call tomorrow then. This is Two signing off."

Turning the walkie off, Ani placed it on the bedside table. Removing the towels from her body and hair, she grabbed fresh pair of panties and one of Billy's old undershirts to wear to bed. As soon as she turned the light off and shut her eyes, Ani drifted off to sleep.

"You can't be serious? You want to basically break into a hospital to steal what?"

"Sodium chloride. Trust me on this, pretty boy. I know what I'm talking about."

"But why?"

Rolling her eyes at Steve had become her new favorite activity over the past three days. Ani had spent three whole days before this in the library with the kids looking up what she would need to battle severe dehydration in a human body. Everything she read kept point to fluids. Further research had told her that the body would be weak

when awaking from a coma. She felt confident that she could run the IV into Billy's bloodstream, it was the getting him out of this factory that was giving her stress. She would need Steve and Jonathan to carry him out. Their animosity towards him was clear, and she would manipulate them if needed.

"Christ, I'll go through this again for you. If what I'm guessing is true, he's in a coma. We're going to have to run fluids through his system to battle the dehydration. He'll be weak when he comes around. We'll need to get him out of that place and somewhere safe and private."

Steve looked over the counter at her, "You use the word 'we' a lot. How do you know we'll help you?"

"I know why El can't use her powers. I also know about the beasts you've been fighting. I also know that the Mind Flayer doesn't 'flay' minds. That thing uses humans as pawns to spread fear and violence. It doesn't take over the body as much as make a copy of their body to take over the world. It hates humans. And I know why."

Steve walked the length of his kitchen and came around to sit beside her at the kitchen island. Lacing his fingers in front of him, he placed his chin on his hands and looked thoughtfully at her. "You think you're going to use information as leverage. That's smart. I can see why Billy was drawn to you. Besides the obvious reasons," Steve looked up and down her body suggestively.

Slapping him would have been too easy. Instead, she looked Steve right in the eyes and channeled disgust in Steve's direction. Within a second, Steve was looking at her like she was no better than trash on the sidewalk. Smiling, she shrugged her shoulders and stood up from the table.

"I just need help. I'm not asking you to be friends with him. Hell, I'm not asking for help after we get him out of there. I'm asking you to help me get him in the car and into my motel room. That's all I need. Just help me with that, and I'll do the rest."

Steve threw his hands up, shaking his head. "Yeah, sure. I'll help. The guy only beat the piss out of me last year but why not." Steve walked to the fridge, pulling out two beers. He held one out to Ani. "You

want?"

"Aren't you afraid Mommy and Daddy will come home?"

"I haven't seen them in weeks. I doubt they'll be home today."

Ani took the beer and cracked the can open. Taking a sip, she wondered what having parents was like. She had never known her own, and had poor replacements in the way of orderlies, lab technicians, and Dr. Brenner. She had never met Billy's mother, but new Neil enough to know that's not how a child should be raised. Absent parents were an even new conundrum to her.

"That must suck."

"I think being raised in a lab, and then spending your teenage years living on the street."

"Actually, we lived on the beach or in abandoned houses when we found them. Once, during a bad earthquake, the house we lived in was leveled. Billy snuck me into his room through his window. That was the first time I ever slept in a comfortable bed with sheets." Her eyes glazed over with tears that she blinked back furiously.

"He sounds like a completely different person when you talk about him."

"He is a different person. At least he was to me." Ani stood up and threw her now empty beer can in the trash across the room. "Look, thanks for the drink and the glistening conversation. I have a job interview tomorrow morning. I should get going."

"Can I ask how long you plan on being in town? Getting a job sounds pretty permanent." Steve walked with her to the front door. Ani noticed Steve was waiting for an answer, his curiosity was rolling over her in waves.

The truth was, Ani didn't know. She didn't know how long it would take to get Billy to recover. She knew she would need money to care for him and pay for the room she was in. She wasn't about to tell this perfect stranger that. Instead, she smiled sweetly at Steve.

"Baby, in my line of work it's not permanent. I'll be working as a guest rather than a permanent feature." She winked at him and walked out his front door.

Author's Notes:

Welcome back! Welcome to our newest followers: **maryamorevna**, **OceanxEyes**, **HunterL4D**, and **TamashinoSuzume**. Thank you to our new favorites: **Sayoko Yuki** and **Luna888**. If I missed anyone, I'm sorry and please let me know! That's all for now. More to come. Enjoy! Please review.

5. Chapter 5

July 19, 1985 Long Beach, California

Six woke to the telephone in the hall ringing. Knowing that One was most likely still sleeping, she threw back the covers and made her way to the phone. Rubbing the sleep from her eyes, she knew it was not Two on the other end. She would need to be some semblance of awake to answer this phone call. Six put on her most professional voice and let the owner of the club in Hawkins profusely thank her. He could not get over how she was sending her best performer to him for an unknown amount of time. She would have laughed at the man, but he sounded so excited to have Two working there that she didn't have the heart to. She knew he never wondered how they even heard of his little club, nor would she tell him. Six ended the call as quickly as she could and headed back to the bedroom. She found One was not in bed as she expected. The ding of the toaster alert her to his presence in the kitchen.

She found him seated on the kitchen counter next to the toaster. He was cross legged and shoveling waffles into his mouth at an alarming pace. He smiled around a mouth full of food when she appeared in the doorway.

"Eggos, my love? Where did these come from?"

"Sister. Money."

"You went to Two's house? When? What if you bumped into someone?"

"Early. Back streets. Store open early. No one there."

"The workers were there. How did you pay and accept change without touching someone?" Six was worried. If One had touched someone and saw visions of their past or future, he would have been a blubbering ball on the floor. She hated that his twin sister just left in the middle of the night to go save The Idiot.

One nodded absentmindedly in her direction, fork never stopping its

rapid ascent and descent to and from his mouth. "Exact money. No change. Eat please. Work to do. Sister okay. Billy okay. Hawkins not."

She hated feeling like his sister should have done more to help One learn to speak properly. She should still be in California helping care for him. They both should have made more of an effort with One, seeing as they learned to speak properly by sneaking into the movies with The Idiot and his idiot friends. Two was responsible for One. Six only took over caring for him when they were fifteen and it became clear that Billy Hargrove was going to be the end of things for Two. Six loved one as much as Two loved Billy. She knew it wasn't Two's fault. One was just a handful without his twin to ground him. Two was the only thing that kept One from shutting down completely. Maybe it was because they were twins. Maybe it was because seeing other people's pasts and futures with a touch made One unable to function like Two and Six could. Six felt guilty for accepting the monetary help Two provided and feeling so ungrateful for Two allowing One to live with the woman who was head over heels in love with him.

Shit, after everything Two went through in the labs...she still does what she does to get money from clients to provide for both households. As if emotionally manipulating older, rich men wasn't bad enough, she went out every night to work to provide for all of them.

"Ok, baby. Let's eat and then we'll call your sister, yeah?" She just received a nod in return.

Ani arrived at the Byers' house later that afternoon. Her interview went better than one would expect. She hadn't even needed to manipulate the owner into giving her a job. By the end of, she had signed a contract to work there for an unspecified amount of time until she decided to leave. She thanked whatever God was listening for having Six place the phone call for her.

She stared at her reflection in the rearview mirror of her Shelby. She had wiped most of the make up off her face and ran a brush through her hair to remove the high tease she had put it in. She still didn't look like the woman who looked back at her from the reflective glass. Ani knew this would have to do until she got back to her room to

shower. Right now, she had work to do.

Ani hadn't even raised her fist to knock before the door opened before her. A woman not much taller than her stood before her, one hand on the doorknob and the other on the door itself. This had to be Will and Jonathan's mom. The resemblance was too strong for her to be anything but.

"Hello...I'm Ani. You must be Mrs. Byers. It's a pleasure. I'm here to pick up Max?"

Joyce Byers looked at Ani with suspicion running through her eyes. Ani could practically see Joyce trying to figure out where she had come from. "How do you know Max? I've never seen you before. I work in the general store; I would have met you by now."

"I'm visiting from California, ma'am. I was an old friend of Billy's. Max became something of a little sister to me before they moved out here. I promise, I'm not lying."

"Hold on." Joyce shut the door all but three inches. "Max! Jonathan! Could you come here a minute. No, El. It's okay, honey. It's just some girl here to see Max."

Ani rolled her eyes at the back of Joyce's head. Over her shoulder, Ani could see Jonathan coming to the front door. Joyce stepped away from the door and was whispering to her oldest son. Max and El appeared in the door. Both girls reached an arm outside and pulled Ani in, shutting the door behind her.

"Ani good. She's allowed in. Don't worry." Ani smiled in El's direction. She focused on Joyce, sending calm assurance to the woman.

"Okay, honey. I have to go to work. Be good. I'll be home late." Joyce opened the front door just as Steve appeared on the steps. "Well, it seems there's going to be an actual party at my house without me. Hello, Steve. Goodbye." Joyce waved over her shoulder and got into her car, leaving the kids to do whatever she thought they would do.

"King Steve, good evening." Ani smirked at the boy in front of her before grabbing the bags from his hands. "Oh good, you got

everything I asked for. Here. There's a pair for everyone over eighteen in here. Where's Nancy?"

"I'm right here, Ani." Nancy took the set of scrubs Ani handed her. "What are the scrubs for?"

"Just put them on. Steve, make sure you cover your hair. It will raise red flags. Nancy, a ponytail will do. We don't have long to do this, so we need to be quick."

The girls disappeared into the bathroom to change. Ani bent over to pull her pants up when she felt Nancy staring.

"You're right. My parents would have never believed that I knew you from school. I don't even know where someone would get a tattoo like that." Nancy reached out a hand to touch the mermaid running along Ani's right side. She caught herself before her hand touched the other girl's skin.

"It's okay. You can touch it. It doesn't bother me."

Nancy shook her head, pulling her own scrub top over her head. "What are we doing? Why do we need scrubs?"

"I'm going to show you guys what I can really do. Small emotional manipulations aren't just my forte. And we need a lot of supplies to make sure Billy doesn't actually die."

Author's Notes:

Sorry for the delay. I had a situation with one of my dogs last night and couldn't sit down to finish this chapter. Hopefully, I can have another chapter up shortly after finishing this one. I just need some time to decompress after writing this one. Adding in One and Six took a lot out of me. I finished their entire section before my computer restarted without a save, and I had to rewrite everything. This version is better I promise. Welcome to our newest followers: **LOVEtoLIVE17**, **Laurafxox**, **DJDragon21**, (love your penname), **Grazielly**, **mihel asyki akatsuki schizo**, **MirandaRose22**, **Kylie Winchester**, **midnightwolf1995**, and **4plywhinicity**. It really makes

my day to see new followers! I'm glad you all are joining us

HunterL4D: I'm so sorry that I missed a day. I feel like I didn't help your insomnia now! Hopefully, I get another chapter up for you tonight, so you have more to read! Also, I must confess. I'm not the first author to mention new followers. I've seen others do it. I know there is an author by the name of **Rizzle** who does mention followers on her story that I have been reading for literally *years* now. If you like Harry Potter and ship Dramione, I recommend Love in the Time of the Zombie Apocalypse. It is phenomenal!

Until next time, my dears!

6. Chapter 6

The ride to the hospital seemed like the longest ride Ani had ever taken. To make matters worse, she was sitting in the backseat of Jonathan's car with Steve. The boy couldn't take his eyes off her. Apparently, the disgust she sent his way did not stop his appreciation for her looks. She would consider making him loathe her after they brought Billy back. Thoughts of watching Steve look at her like he looked when she first brought up Billy flashed in her mind. It made her smile slightly, and of course Steve noticed.

"Do you find it amusing you're using us to steal medical supplies? We live here, you don't. If we get caught, we're so screwed."

"That's why I provided *you* with a surgical cap. All three of you have face masks. Not uncommon in the hospital. When we get there, ill distract the security guard at the desk so you three can sneak in. The kids gave me a layout of the hospital while you and Jonathan were changing. I know what I'm doing." Memories of One suffering from a lung infection when they were ten flashed in her mind. She remembered the IV's the nurses at the lab inserted into the veins on the back of his hands. She could do the same for Billy.

Jonathan parked in a lot labeled 'Employees Only' as Ani had instructed. The four teens walk around the building, placing masks over faces and hair under caps. Ani kept her face uncovered, hoping the security guard at the desk was a man. Walking in the front door, she breathed a sigh of relief that he was. Sauntering over to the desk, she adjusted the duffle bag strap on her shoulder while pushing her breasts out further. The guard's eyes traveled from her face to her chest in a flash, and she used that second to send a wave of lust over the guard.

"Can I help you?" He was already sweating.

"Larry," Ani read his name badge and breathed his name out. Looks like those old Sunday matinee screenings of Marilyn Monroe were going to pay off. "I'm new here, honey. I can't find my badge, but I'm late for my first shift in the ICU. Do you think you could loan me a spare keycard until I talk to my supervisor? It'll just be for this shift. I

promise I'll return it to you before I leave."

"I don't know, Miss. What's your name? I can call up to Nurse Fitzpatrick in ICU and get you all sorted out.

"Larry, I really don't want to bother her. She's already backed up because I'm late." She looked around the lobby with fear playing across her features. She saw Steve motioning to her that they were holding the elevator. She stood on her tiptoes as far as possible, leaning her chest onto her folded arms on the counter. "To be honest, honey, I'm a little afraid of her already. I wanted to be in the kids' wing, but Fitzpatrick thought I would be better in her wing. Could you help a girl out just this once? I'll owe you, big time."

There go the eyes right down to.... yup, jackpot. Larry, you're a sucker. You'll never get to play with these.

Larry smiled nervously, grabbed a spare card from the desk drawer. He placed it on the counter and slid it over to her. Ani placed her hand over his much larger one, smiling sweetly. She did a little giggle and a bounce of joy. Larry's eyes widened in his head and he fidgeted with his tie.

"Oh, thanks! I owe you so much! I'll be back later with it! Hope you'll be here to get it from me." She winked before turning to head for the elevator. Once she reached the other three, she stopped and held up a hand. She sent another wave of lust to Larry before heading into the elevator Jonathan held open for her. She knew it was enough to keep him quiet. "Where's the ICU in this place?"

Two floors up, the four were cautiously making their way to the supply closet. Ani swiped the key card on the door, and the four rushed in. Nancy began grabbing items Ani instructed her to grab, handing them over to the other girl to place in the bag. Both boys stood near the door, listening for anyone approaching the door.

"Okay, that's it. That's all we'll need. If we need more, we'll have to either hope for a new guard or go to a different hospital." Ani was glad the other three agreed to help her. She could have done this alone, but it was much easier with help. Ani placed a hand on Steve's

arm when he reached for the door. "Easy, big boy. I'll go first. I can take care of anyone who sees me. I can't make them forget about you."

"Forget?" Steve looked at Nancy for help, who just shrugged. "I miss fighting Demodogs with Dustin. Can we go back to that? *Please?*"

Making quick work of exiting the closet, Ani scanned the hallway. There was no one in sight, and she thrust her arm into the door and waved the other three out. They made a mad dash back to the elevator, Jonathan all but punching the call button when they got to it. The light above the doors crept from the fifth floor down. On the third, it stopped for a minute before finally making its way to them. The doors opened to reveal a doctor in deep conversation with a nurse. Ani took in the face and felt her heart squeeze in her chest. Attempting to control her breathing, she slid behind Steve and grabbed his elbow to steady herself.

"Don't move," she whispered. "Don't let him see me."

The doctor walked from the elevator. His eyes roamed over the four of them in their scrubs. "Are you all supposed to be here? Where are your ID badges?"

"We were just going to get them. We left them in the break room." Nancy spoke up before moving into the elevator. "Come on, guys. Let's go!"

Ani walked around the side of Steve furthest from the doctor with her head down. Steve followed and placed himself directly in front of her. Jonathan moved last, hitting the ground floor button on his way in. The doors slid slowly shut behind him, and Ani made eye contact with Brenner for the first time in years.

Larry was still sitting at the desk when the teens came barreling around the corner for the doors. Ani slowed to a stop in the middle of the lobby and turned back around. She jogged to the desk and tossed the keycard on top of it. Leaning on her hands for leverage, she kissed Larry on the cheek.

"Thanks, babe. Looks like I got fired. Maybe some other time."

She ran from the desk, sending forgetfulness to Larry. She almost felt guilty, but guilt wasn't an emotion she felt often within her own body. Shrugging, she dived into the back of Jonathan's car when it appeared in front of her.

"Brimborn. Now!"

On the list of things Anastasia Bradshaw wished she could forget, seeing Billy Hargrove's emaciated body laying on the floor of an abandoned factory was at the top of the list. Just below that may have been watching him walk out her front door on the morning he moved away, but she wasn't sure how long the two would compete for the first spot. The four had barely had to search for him. He was laying right inside the entrance. She didn't know how no one had come across him yet, but she was glad he was at least sheltered from the elements.

Ani had instructed Nancy to leave the bag in the car. She had asked that Nancy bring a blanket from the Byers' house and she was glad to see Nancy clutching it tightly. Kneeling over Billy's chest, she cupped his cheek in her palm. She caressed the smooth skin about the beard that had grown in while he was stuck in his own head. If she chose to forgive him for his indiscretions, he would have to get rid of the beard and cut the hair. She didn't mind it long, but the mullet wasn't to her liking. She turned to the group and began to bark instructions again.

"Steve, I need you where he can't see you at first. He'll be delirious. He also hates you so seeing you will be a shock to him and he'll most likely will lash out. His heart's already under enough stress. Don't make it any worse or you'll regret it. Jonathan, I don't know how he feels about you but sort of stay out of sight but close enough if I need you to help restrain him. Nancy, when I ask for the blanket it, throw it over. Don't wait, just toss. When he comes to and I calm him down, his adrenaline will stop pumping. That's when I need both of you boys to help get him to his feet and get him in the car. I'm driving so I hope that thing can handle what I'm going to do to it." She took a deep breath and laid down next to Billy. "Just be quiet. Don't move around and make noise. Try not to talk. I'm going in."

Everyone moved into position. Ani reached her hand out like she had done a million times before and grasped Billy's hand. She choked down the fear and confusion coming from him. She closed her eyes and reached her plain. Grabbing Billy's tether, she noticed it was thicker than it had been days ago. She had never seen that before but wondered if it was because the length would be much shorter now that she was next to him. It took her seconds to find him. He laid on the blackness surrounding him, eyes shut and a hand under his head.

"Back again? Here I thought you were going to leave me to die. But I'm dreaming so that isn't fucking possible. Unless I'm already dead and the bastard upstairs thinks it's funny to leave me here waiting for you to show up."

"Cut the shit, Hargrove. If you were dreaming, it wouldn't be of me."

"I always dream about you. When are you going to understand that? I'll never be a fairy tale prince, but I'm honest. You're it for me, baby."

Waving a hand in front of her face in annoyance, Ani sneered in his direction. "There were other girls, Billy. Now come on, idiot. I don't have much time and neither do you. Get up. I'm taking you home."

Billy got up and stood in front of her. Her breath caught in her throat as she realized the emaciated body had held a different shape before Billy become lost. He had stacked on more muscle than she remembered. He smiled at her like he always had, predatorily and with a hunger she felt reflected in her own body.

Fuck, I'm going to forgive him after all.

Grabbing his hand, she walked him to the tether. When they reached the plain, she stopped and gripped both his hands in hers. He lowered his head to look in her eyes.

"When I say so I want you to imagine opening your eyes and waking up. You need to imagine it *hard*. Like your life depends on it, because it does. Imagine it until it hurts. When you feel like you can open your eyes do it. Don't wait for me. Just do it."

Billy nodded. He closed his eyes and she could see he was doing as

she asked. It took only a minute, and her hands were gripping air. She opened her own eyes and followed.

Billy was coughing next to her. She could tell her was struggling to breath. Rolling on her side, she sat up and gripped his face in her hands. His eyes met hers for the first time in the physical realm and she couldn't stop the tears from running down her cheeks.

"Breathe, baby. Easy. Take slow deep breaths. You're going to be dizzy, but it goes away. I need you to calm down so we can get you in the car. Can you calm down for me, baby?" He struggled to control his breathing, but Ani could see he was trying his hardest. "That's it. Keep going. I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. Focus on me."

With barely any strength, Billy lifted his head to look at her closely. "You're real. You're here. I wasn't dreaming."

"Yeah. Like I could leave you to die after I knew something was off? What kind of stupid shit do you take me for, William Hargrove? Forever remember?" she lifted her hand, showing him the promise ring, she never took off. "Come on, baby. Breathe slow. I can't move you until you calm down. Nancy, blanket."

Ani caught the blanket easily. She placed her hand on the back of Billy's neck, pulling him into a sitting position. His breathing had slowed to a manageable rate. Ani raised herself to her knees before placing one foot on the ground behind Billy. She threw the blanket over his shoulders and felt like crying when his hands raised to hold it close around him.

"Do you think you can walk?"

Looking out of the side of his eye at her, Billy let out a small snort. "What do you think? I know you were in a library researching coma patients. I should have never taught you how to read."

"You taught me a lot you shouldn't have. It was a yes or no question, limp dick."

"We'll see how limp you think my dick is when I can stand up. I don't remember you ever having any complaints."

Signaling to the boys, Ani wiped a tear from her eyes. She let the boys grab Billy under his arms and haul him to an upright position. Before he could see who was putting his arms over their shoulders, she bathed him in calm. He looked her in the eyes, dark blue iris's locking with hers. He knew she was manipulating him. But she was here. He was back in his body because of her. He had a lot of explaining to do.

"Let's go. Get him in the car. I changed my mind. Jonathan you drive. Nancy get in the back with us. I think it would be better if the boys were in the front."

Ani slipped into the back seat and helped pull Billy in while the boys pushed him into the car. After some minor yelling and name calling, she forced him to put his head in her lap with his feet jammed on the back floor. Nancy hurriedly sat at the other end, carefully avoiding Billy's dirty legs. Jonathan started the car and pulled onto the road, driving as quickly as possible.

Looking down into her lap, Ani ran her fingers through Billy's hair. She began to hum softly to him to keep him calm without manipulating him. The last thing she needed was for him to see Steve and make his recovery harder on himself. She smiled down at him, noting his eyes were already drifted back closed. She knew that was normal for coma victims, and guessed it wasn't much different for people trapped outside of their physical body. She heard him whisper something to her.

"What? Go to sleep, we'll be there soon. I'll take care of you."

He smiled up at her before reaching behind her head and pulling her hair free from its holder. She shook her hair out so its cascaded around them. Leaning down, she turned her face to put her ear directly at his mouth. Her breath caught in her throat when she heard him speak the name no one had called her in almost two years.

"Stassi..."

Author's Notes:

Since I felt so bad about not updating for two days, I updated within a few hours of the last update. Hope it's a good one for you. BILLY IS BACK IN HIS BODY AND SHENANIGANS ARE ABOUT TO ENSUE. I can promise you this. Its gonna be a rocky road from here. I know I've kind of already made Billy a more romanticized version of himself, but don't worry. Astral plaining does that to a buddy. That's your only warning.

Good night! See everyone soon! Please review!

7. Chapter 7

It took Jonathan and Steve twenty minutes to pull Billy from the backseat of the car. Ani helpfully used her position under his head to slide his upper body as carefully as she could. Had Billy been awake it would have been much easier. Eventually, the boys were able to throw his arms over their shoulders and begin to walk and drag him to the door of Ani's room. Ani maneuvered around the boys and unlocked the door for them to move into the room. Nancy followed in behind the rest, shutting the door behind them.

"Put him on the bed, we'll need to get those dirty clothes off him. Nancy, help me with these covers." The girls threw the sheets back on Ani's bed while the boys laid Billy down. "Steve, grab me towels from the bathroom."

Steve hurried into the bathroom. He didn't think now was the time to argue, Ani had been short with them the entire ride here. Something changed in the car. The sweet and somewhat snarky girl suddenly became a brash and dominating thing. He wondered if being around Hargrove had caused this change in demeanor, or if this was truly how she was. Turning with towels in his arms, he noticed the door had shut behind him. He eyed the under garments with interest. These did not look like something any normal girl would wear. But Ani, with her tiny shorts and array of black rock band shirts, did not strike him as "normal". Hell, he had never seen a girl with tattoos before.

"Thank you," Ani nodded at him when he handed her the towels. She and Nancy made quick work of laying the towels out on the bed. The two girls moved over to where Billy laid, unconscious but breathing. Nancy removed his shoes and socks, while Ani struggled to lift him to a seated position. "A little help would be nice."

Jonathan lifted the smaller boy up, moving in and out of Ani's way while she removed his shirt. Steve watched in interest while Jonathan laid Billy back down and Ani moved to undo the fastens on Billy's jeans. Both girls gripped a leg when the smaller girl had succeeded and pulled the jeans off with all their might, pulling Billy's boxers down slightly as they went. Both girls fell backwards into the

other bed and looked at each other suppressing giggles. The sight made Steve sick.

"This is serious, Nancy! Stop laughing. You'll make me laugh. Seriously, I need to get the fucking IV in him soon."

"He called you a self-righteous bitch. Don't you think waking him up was enough?"

Ani looked at Steve, her blue eyes suddenly a steel grey. "No, I don't. He's an asshole, but he's still *my* asshole, Harrington. Don't you fucking think you're going to sit here and tell me what's 'enough'. You don't know how to handle him and that's not my problem."

The boys shot glances at each other when Ani turned back to Hargrove. She reached one hand in the air, snapped her fingers, and pointed between them and the space next to her.

"I think she wants us to move him again," Jonathan looked at Steve, smirking.

"She can fucking do it herself for all I care. That prick just about broke my nose more than once already."

"Now. Or I swear to God, *I'll* break your fucking nose. And trust me, I'm just big enough to do it."

Steve was getting sick of hauling Hargrove around. Seriously, he had lost weight but still felt like he weighed a ton. When Ani asked for one of them to get her two clean and damp wash cloths, Steve motioned to Jonathan to follow him to the bathroom. Once the door shut behind them, Steve moved to the sink. He jerked his head to the back of the door, running wash cloths under the hot water in the sink. "What do you make of them?"

Jonathan looked at the bras and panties with wide eyes. He blushed a deep red. "Who wears something like that? Where would she wear something like that?"

Steve didn't know. There was a lot they did not know. What he did know is that Ani risked a lot to save Hargrove. She preferred to stay in a dingy motel instead of in Nancy's offered home. She owned and

wore underwear that was even making him blush. Who was this girl? Seriously, who the fuck was she?

Hours later, Ani had washed the dirt and blood from Billy's body. She cleaned the cut on his forehead as best as she could, but it had begun to close and would scar. He was going to secretly love that. IV's had been run into his body with shaking, inexperienced hands. Twice she had to close her eyes and dredge up dim memories of how the nurses had placed them in her brother's hands. She smiled widely when everything seemed to be going to plan. Leaning down, she kissed his forehead once more.

"I'm not going to ask for help taking care of him. But I need it. I don't trust Max to be here alone, and I don't want her here if he wakes up. She doesn't need to hear the shit he'll say. If any of you are willing, I'd appreciate it. I have to work or I'm going to have to load a very weak Billy into my car and try to get to California where I'll have people who can help me. Rooms come cheap here, but the bill still needs to be paid. And I will have to eat eventually."

Nancy stepped forward to place a hand on her shoulder. Ani looked at the fingers on her skin. She knew Nancy would help. It was the boys she would have to worry about.

"He never really did much to me. I wasn't popular like Steve. There was no crown from me Billy felt like he needed to take." Jonathan shrugged. He nodded his consent to stay on Billy Watch.

"Fuck me...alright, I'll help. But if he wakes up and runs his mouth, I'm breaking *his* nose."

Ani locked the door behind them after they slowly left her alone. She made her way to the bathroom after checking that the covers were pulled up over Billy just right. She quickly showered and grabbed the last towel from the rack. She would need to find a laundry mat soon. Stepping from the tub, her eyes landing on the clothes hanging from the hook.

Fuck...

Mentally rolling her eyes, she figured the boys had seen them. They hadn't been quiet discussing her things either. She could hear them plainly through the walls. If Nancy had heard, she kept politely quiet about it. It would surprise her if they figured out what those clothes meant. She doubted they would learn more about her than she had already told them. She let out a sigh and dressed in her satin nightgown before heading back into the bedroom. Billy was just as she left him, sleeping on his back with his left arm comfortable resting above the sheets. She left his IV out in case it needed to be flushed or adjusted. Laying down on his right, she rolled onto her side to face him. With her left arm hooked under her head, she closed her eyes and began to drift to sleep.

"You know I fucking hate King Steve, right? The Byers guy is ok, just too fucking weird to even be on my level. Now Nancy... the two of you together make a hell of a team. She's soft where you're rough. She's all doe eyes and sweet smiles, while you're calculating and almost cold. The only smile you can form that honest is seductive. Those fucking idiots can't even tell you're using them to fix me."

Ani's eyes popped open at the sound of Billy's deep, rough voice. He sounded like he swallowed nails. Flipping on the table between the beds, she turned to see Billy's eyes wide open staring at her. Unable to look away, she watched as his eyes traveled down her face to her chest and past her breasts to her waist. When his eyes travelled back to her own, she was blushing.

"You were awake the whole time? I can't believe you didn't at least let me, of all people, know. I wouldn't have kept them here so long. I could have done everything on my own."

"I didn't want to be alone with you too soon. I knew we would fight and I'm just not ready to start again. I'm almost sorry for the name calling but you called me a limp dick piece of horse shit."

"You deserve it. There's more where that came from, pal. I'm not done deciding to forgive you for the other girls. And I when I ask questions, you answer. Don't make me force you to feel honest to answer me. You're honest, I let you feel your own emotions."

"You manipulated me back there. I wasn't calm. I knew who was

walking me to the car. You made me accept what was going on. You promised." Billy sounded just like she remembered. They were alone and there was no one to force him to be the asshole everyone else thought he was. He sounded lost and confused, but also like a petulant child who did not get what they wanted.

"You promised too, Liam."

Billy opened his mouth to speak but couldn't. He knew he had used his special name for her in the car. He also knew just how pissed she was at him. He would have to tell her about the other girls. He hoped she would forgive him. But in the time, they had known each other, she hadn't forgiven him for any other time he had crossed her. If his temper was bad, Ani's was like a tornado, fast and destructive. Soon, they would be almost like they were before the move. Fast to fight, and faster to fuck. He couldn't imagine any of the girls in this town would be willing to scream at him for three hours over a slight dig, only to be screaming his name an hour after that. He also didn't know any girl who could get him to open up about his dad and clean his wounds after a fight. Ani was everything all wrapped up in a beautiful little package. He felt rage welling up inside him at the idea that someone else may have already figured that out.

"You've lost weight, Stassi. When was the last time you ate?"

"Don't worry about it."

"How's Adam? I'm surprised you left him alone."

"*One* is as well as can be. He moved in with Six after you left. She needed him more than I did, and I was happy for the space."

"Still taking care of them?"

"Six uses her talents to make some money. I help when they need it."

Billy held his right arm out and nodded down his chest. Ani bit her lip, contemplating if this was a bad idea. But it had been too long, and her body moved on its own to settle against his side. She laid her head on his chest, listening to his heart.

"I'm still fucking angry with you, Liam." There she went using that

name again. "But, Christ, I missed you."

She felt Billy's lips on her head. He didn't pull away yet, and she heard him breathe deeply. He was smelling her hair. "I know. But I know you aren't as mad as you're pretending to be. You're using your special name."

Author's Notes:

Hey everyone! Hope everyone is enjoying this and their summers. Whether you work or are off from school, I hope you get to enjoy some time between now and the end of next month.

Thanks to our new followers: **Fly Pig**, , and **xxPrtlyCldyxx**. Thanks to everyone who has favorited as well!

Until next time.

8. Chapter 8

Ani woke with her head on Billy's chest, his arm wrapped tightly around her. She moved slowly away from him. She felt something tugging at her emotional plain but didn't need to look to see who it was. She picked up the phone on the table, dialing Six's number. Her brother answered on the second ring.

"Sister."

"Hey you. What's wrong? Is everything okay?"

"Saw you. Saw Billy."

"So, you know he's alright then, buddy? There isn't any need to worry anymore. Thank you for finding him for me."

"Billy okay. Sister okay. Hawkins not okay." She loved her brother but worried that the endless testing done on him in the labs left him slightly brain dead. He couldn't string together a full sentence if he tried. Six blamed her, saying Ani didn't try hard enough to help him after the two girls had learned. But she knew her brother better than anyone. It wasn't lack of trying that made him speak like that, it was just how he was.

"I know, baby. I feel it too. It's here. I might have help this time from a girl like us."

"Okay. Tell Six. Got it."

"Okay, I love you. I'll call soon." She heard her brother tell her the same and then the line went dead. She hung up the phone, sighing.

"Still got that freaky twin thing going on."

"Fuck off, Billy."

Billy had seen the anger in her turn her eyes grey before, but never had those eyes been directed at him. It was shocking to see her looking at him like a stranger. The time apart seemed to change a lot in their relationship.

"Stassi, I'm sorry. What the fuck is going on between us? We used to be close. You've never been this angry at me before."

"You left, Liam. You left and didn't even wake me up to say goodbye," Ani vaulted from the bed and slammed the bathroom door shut behind her. Billy laid in there, struggling to remember what happened. The longer he laid there, the more he felt the need to use the bathroom.

"Um, hey. Stassi? I need to piss," he called, hoping she would hear and take mercy on him. He was rewarded with the soft click of the bathroom door opening, and Ani emerging in fresh clothes. She was piling her hair in the top of her head in a bun she learned from some of the surfer girls from his friends back in California. He smiled at the memory of her trying to fit in without letting anyone know she was too different.

"Come on, fat ass. Let's see if I can get you in there." She grabbed the IV pole he hadn't noticed before. When she saw him staring at it, she smiled devilishly at him. "They come apart and clip back together easy. Simple transport in a duffle bag."

"You're fucking brilliant. You know that, right?"

A rare blush crept across her cheeks as she grabbed his right hand to pull him to a sitting position. Billy swung his legs over the side of bed, feeling slightly dizzy. He carefully stood up, his unattached arm going around Ani's shoulders. His stomach flipped when she placed one hand on his spine and the other across his stomach. He felt both sets of fingers twitch as if she was stopping herself from caressing his skin. He smirked down at the top of her head.

"I don't remember you being this short."

"I don't remember you being this fat, but some things change I guess." She looked up at him with a familiar spark in her eyes. She wanted to play Bait Billy, and as much as he wanted to, he knew he didn't have the strength to end the game how it always ended.

They slowly made their way to the small bathroom. She helped him sit on the toilet, knowing that she wouldn't be able to hold him up

while he relieved himself. She kept the door open with her body, hiding the things hanging from the back. What Billy didn't know won't hurt him. She felt dirty keeping secrets from him, but he left her no choice when he left. She did what she had to because she had no other choice. It was the only work she could find without ever being found by the government.

Once Billy was deposited back in the bed and his IV bag changed, Ani picked up the walkie talkie. She caught the look of surprise Billy shot her. She knew he knew where the walkie had come from. She smirked over her shoulder at him, settling on the bed. She was within reach of him, and he made good use of that knowledge to start tracing patterns across her bare thigh.

"Mad Max this is Two. Mad Max this is Two. Do you copy?" She slapped the back of his hand and pointed between his hand and his own body. Without looking at him, she waved her finger in his direction, silently telling him no. He felt confused at this development, but then felt calm the next. She was manipulating him again. "If you touch me again without my permission, I will break that hand. And I can't put a cast on you, so you'll be touching other girls with fucked up fingers for the rest of your life, William"

"Two this is Mad Max. I'm with The Party. We talked to Ice Princess already. You have the package?!" Max's tone was high pitched and excited. Ani grinned that at least one person was excited to have Billy back. She heard a snort behind her at the mention of package. She eyed Billy, knowing he wasn't thinking of his entire body, only his favorite part.

"No one wants to see your goods right now. Stop laughing and get better." But she could see that just one round of fluids had put color back in his face. He was plumping up before her eyes, and it put hope in her that he would pull through. She clicked the walkie again. "Mad Max, he's awake and right here, sweetie. He's doing fine so far. Needs to learn how to recover like a gentleman but he's fine. Is Neil home? And you steal the keys to the Camero?"

"He's home, Two. I don't know when he's leaving today. I don't know that I can make it out of here with the keys. I don't know if I could

drive it again."

"Okay, I have a plan. We'll figure it out. Sit tight guys. You'll be needed soon."

"Two? It's Hair King? Are *you* okay? I caught what you said. He hasn't tried to hurt you?"

Billy tended beside her and made to grab for the walkie. Ani held it at her arms length, as short as it was. One look at her face told him to not question her for once in his life. He fell back to his pillow, sulking. She knew he would start a fight later.

"He's just got a case of Russian Fingers today, Hair King. Nothing I can't handle. Tell Ice Princess to be on time today. I can't have her and Big Brother making me late for work. Signing off." She clicked the walkie off. "Don't you start your shit today. I'm in no mood. I have work tonight. I'm going to go get actual food for us. I saw a diner down the street. I'll get you a burger and fries."

"Can I also get a milkshake?"

He looked so weak and tired; she wouldn't have denied him anything if she tried. Any anger she felt disappeared as his pulled his signature puppy dog look on her. Leaning over him, she pressed her lips to his softly. Before he could react, she pulled back. "Of course, baby. A strawberry one."

"I like chocolate better."

She smirked, knowing exactly where he was going with this. "I'll get both and we can share them." Ani grabbed her keys and hurried to her car.

Billy touched his hand to his lips after she walked out. He thought the time apart and the other girls would have made these feelings for her stop. But seconds later, he could still feel her soft lips against his. Her perfume clouded around him, and he tasted the unique flavor of vanilla and cinnamon that came from only Ani. The other girls didn't put a stop to his feelings for the California girl. They made them strong because none of them could equal her. He jumped in surprise

at the sound of a loud engine turning over in the parking lot. It was a muscle car, he knew. Something Ani would have driven to give him a heart attack and make him hard all at the same time. The girl was a tease.

"Fuck me, I'm going to have to work to get her back..."he whispered in the silence as he heard the car pull out of the lot.

Nancy and Jonathan showed up exactly when they promised to be there. Ani had her things packed for work and was waiting patiently when the headlights shown through the drawn curtains. Billy was sleeping again. He had complained of muscle pain after his third trip to the bathroom, mostly from them not being used for some time. She had given him a small dose of morphine to help. She smoothed the curls back from his forehead, laying a soft kiss on his temple. She was adjusting the blankets when a knock sounded from the door.

"I'll be gone a few hours. If it's past one just go. I shouldn't be much longer than that." Ani wasn't sure if she should thank them or not. She moved to the side to let them. "I wrote down the number to the club on the paper on the dresser. Feel free to watch as much TV as you want. He'll be out like a light for a while. I gave him something for the pain. If he wakes up and starts shit call me right away."

"We'll call Steve if we have trouble. It's your first night at work. We don't want to disturb you." Nancy was ready to ask what kind of club Ani was working at but thought better of it.

"Max is not allowed to see him without me here, under *no* circumstances." Ani grabbed her keys and opened the door. She looked back at Billy before picking her bag up. "I'll be back soon."

The next morning passed in a blur for Steve. He spent a few hours working at the video store. Robin was needling him mercilessly about where he had been when they weren't working. He kept quiet for her sake but also for Billy's. He worried that the lab would know Billy was alive and come looking for him soon. He felt sick that he was even considering helping the asshole out more than he already had.

The kids stopped by asking vague enough questions that no one would suspect anything. Max looked hopeful. He wondered if the other boy had been as big of a prick in private as he had in public. He wasn't sure, but he doubted he had been. Maybe they had a somewhat normal relationship at home. He couldn't promise Max she could see her stepbrother soon but had promised to speak the Ani about it at the next chance he got. Which is why he was knocking on her room door at five in the afternoon, a full hour before he was supposed to be there.

"You're early," Ani didn't open the door all the way. "What do you want?"

"A lap dance," Steve saw her visibly gulp. Interesting. "I came to talk to you about the prisoner, Warden Bradshaw."

And stepped outside of the room, flipping the door stopper in place. She crossed her arms under her breasts. Steve was momentarily distracted.

"It's about Max. She wants to see him."

Ani threw her hands up. "Okay, okay. Look, I want her to see him. They had a half-way decent relationship before the move. But he needs another few days to get back to shape. Any sort of stress is going to cause issues. He's getting better quickly. It's been two days and he already is starting to look like the boy I fell for. Just a few more days. I'll walkie over to her and tell her."

"Alright, when you're ready I'll bring her over. You've got a half hour before you need to go. Do you want me to go pick you up some food?"

"No, thanks. I had to feed him before I left. He's asleep. He won't even know you're here. I gave him something to knock him out. I'll be back around midnight unless I get held up."

"What did you get? I doubt you know where all the good joints."

"KFC. There's plenty left if you get hungry. Do you like KFC?"

"It's finger-lickin' good."

Author's Notes:

Hey! Thanks for hanging in there with me. We are getting somewhere, I promise! Don't give up on me, please.

Thanks to our newest followers: **charlottekerr25**, **ArkhamAsylumPatient**, and **Harley 29 joker**. Welcome to the family. Thanks for joining us on this wild ride.

See everyone soon!

9. Chapter 9

Days passed in a blur for the group. Ani spent her days caring for Billy as best as she could. He was finally up and walking on his own. She could see flashes of anger and resentment flash across his eyes every time she stopped him from going outside. She felt guilty every time they argued over his confinement. But she couldn't risk his parents or anyone else seeing him walking around town. She knew he would have to leave eventually, but they would be leaving together. Once he was out of this town he could do as he pleased. For now they were both trapped in this room.

Max had been to see him twice already. Steve dropped her off in the early morning the first day, promising to be back around to take her home. The reunion was bittersweet to Ani's eyes. She had to hold back the tears watching Max hesitantly walk over to her stepbrother, wrapping her arms around him. He hugged her back just as tentatively, a smirk on his face. She left the room to give them some space to talk. When she returned, they were playing cards that Max had brought with her. This second trip proved no different. She came back with milkshakes to a card game already in progress.

"I'm glad to see you two back to normal. I hope it stays that way." Ani looked pointedly at her childhood love.

"Can you tell me how you guys met?" Max asked with a twinkle in her eye.

Ani laughed, and sat down next to Billy's legs. She began to remove his IV's. He no longer needed them. "It's a long story, Maxi. But I'll tell you. So, my twin brother and I were born and raised in a place similar to where your friend Eleven grew up. When we were thirteen, a fire broke out in the facility. We were allowed to socialize with each other at our base, so we had friends with others with abilities. Six came to our room when the fire started. It was one of the other newer kids, she could start fires whenever she wanted. Our friend Three, he could teleport himself anywhere. His room was lined with lead to contain him though, it made him weak. All of the doors opened that day. Three...he tried to save himself. We didn't know it at the time, but he could transport others. He saw the three of us

running down the hall holding hands. When we stopped in front of him, he put his hand on mine and suddenly we were on the beach. There was Billy, as cute as a button, surfing. He took us to his house, got us some clothes and showed us where to hide. We left by morning but I couldn't stay away from him. So I kept going to the beach to meet up with him. He used to sneak me into the movies with him to help me learn how to speak."

"Alyss never liked me. She started coming too, with Adam. She learned, but he never could. I always felt bad for him."

"They hate those names you know. I think because I let you pick names for all of us."

Billy smirked, "I did a damn good job picking names and you know it."

"You think so, don't you babe? I have to get ready for work. Steve will be here soon to get you Max. Then he'll be back to stay with you," Ani pointed her finger into his chest. "Behave this time. He's bringing Jonathan as back up."

"Why the fuck are you keeping me here locked up? Is this a new kinky game for you, Stassi? Or do you not want me to find out you're fucking King Steve?" She shivered at the implications behind his words.

Instead of lowering herself to his level again, she turned on her heel and went to shower. She called a goodbye to Max and heard Steve knock on the door a few minutes later. When she emerged in his old AC/DC shirt and shorts, her blood had stopped boiling. Almost two years of no contact, and she felt heartbreak and anger pulled like a taunt rubber band. She was going to snap soon and was worried about watching the fall out. She had never used her gifts to manipulate Billy before, but had done it multiple times since she brought him back. She had seen before what continued emotional manipulation could do to someone. She was the reason Neil Hargrove was the way he was.

Steve knocked on the door five minutes early. Ani flung the door

open in a huff, and stood back to let them enter. Jonathan headed straight for the bathroom, a suspiciously heavy duffel bag in his hands. Ani stood next to Steve, staring Billy down. He gathered she wasn't one to be messed with, but Billy stared back just as intently. After many days of seeing the dynamic between them go from caring and compassionate to setting a tension so thick it choked everyone else, he didn't know if he wanted to know what was going on. The next thing he knew, Ani's small hands were gripped the collar of his shirt and her lips were pressed firmly against his. Unsure what to do, he tried to pull back but her grip tightened as her tongue ran along his lower lip. She pulled back before he could open his mouth and slip his own tongue between her lips.

"If I want to fuck Steve, I will. If I want to fuck Jonathan, I will. If I want them to tag team me, I will. You forget who left who. You forget who waited patiently for a fucking call or letter. I do as I damn well please. Steve, I didn't feed him. Let him fucking starve if he starts. I don't give a fuck anymore."

The murderous look on Billy's face sent a warning trigger off in Jonathan's mind when he walked back into the room. Steve was standing at the door still, rubbing his hand over his lips. He was obviously in shock and oblivious to Billy standing up from the bed. In what felt like slow motion, Billy crossed the room and hand Steve hauled up by his shirt against the wall. Jonathan barely tackled Billy to the ground before his fist connected with Steve's jaw. The two boys struggled to gain the upper hand, rolling until one finally won. There were punches thrown into sides before Steve pulled Billy off Jonathan in a headlock.

"She kissed me, Hargrove. I don't even know why. As sexy as she is, she's obviously still hung up on you. She wanted to piss you off and she did. Calm down and I'll let you go."

Billy stopped struggling. Steve let go and watch as the smaller boy sat down heavily on the closest bed. He pushed his hair from his head, breathing heavy. Steve held out hand to Jonathan, pulling him to his feet. He was clutching his side, face contorted in pain.

"You okay?" Jonathan just nodded. "Go get a fucking shower,

Hargrove. There's clean clothes in the bag. Max took what she could smuggle out of the house. Your shit cologne is in there too. We're going out."

"I'm not going anywhere with you losers."

Something in Jonathan snapped. "How many of your other sycophants are here, man? None of them. Everyone thinks you're dead. We're the closest thing to friends you've got. And we're willing to risk pissing off your ex to try to fucking lift you out of the depression you're going to get sitting here all day. Get a shower now or we'll go without you."

Billy weighed the options in his head. Jonathan was right. Everyone else thought he was dead. Only a handful of people knew he was alive. He was going nuts knowing that. He also hated being stuck in this room all day with a revolving door of baby sitters. He made his decision, standing up to walk to the bathroom.

"Where are we going?"

Steve piped up from the door, cigarette hanging from his lips. He shouted over his shoulder as he walked outside, "The Blue Mermaid. Dress decent."

Rock music pumped from the doors of The Blue Mermaid when the boys pulled up an hour later. All three were dressed better than they normally did. Steve banded each boy a small stack of ones, saved from his tips at Scoops Ahoy. He warned them it was all they were getting. Billy smirked, pulling a larger handful of money out of his jacket pocket. Max hasn't cleaned out his leather jacket, so his last paycheck was still there from when he cashed it out. The other boys looked at him with wide eyes.

"Keep your cash, Stevie. I've got my own."

The three made their way into the bar area after flashing ID's at the door. Ordering a beer each, they headed to the only table available. It was right near the stage. They each took a seat, but Steve and Jonathan worked it out that Billy was right next to the stage. They

watched the girls dance to a few songs. Suddenly the brighter lights were replaced with a deep, darkening red. The stage was cleared out of the few girls. Suddenly, a familiar song began to play. Billy couldn't believe of all the places in the world he was at, Ani's favorite song was playing. He wished she was here. She would have gotten a kick out of seeing hot women stripping. The entire room fell silent as a pair of legs appeared from the ceiling. As the girl spun down the pole, the boys couldn't make out the girl's face. She wore a strip of black lace with eye holes on her face. Her hair was teased to perfection. They each felt their pants tighten looking at her statuesque body accented in black and red lace. All three were wearing very uncomfortable pants when she unhooked her bra, ceremoniously dropping it onto a passing waitress's empty tray.

She danced the length of the song, collecting tips as she went. Every time they slipped money in her thong, they tried to get a good look at her face. For once since moving to Hawkins, Billy couldn't even remember Ani's name. Steve forgot about the pain of losing Nancy. Jonathan forgot Nancy even existed. The girl grabbed high on the pole, spinning around as she flipped her legs up. She gripped the pole tightly between her shapely thighs, and arched her back away from the pole. She let go, curving her body backwards until she was upside down. Realization hit Billy full force. Her face was turned to Billy, baby blue eyes meeting angry ocean waves. Then the lights went out.

Billy was up and out of the front door before the other boys realized he was gone. Steve and Jonathan followed. They found him behind the club rage clearly showing on his face, smoking. He was leaning against Ani's car.

Author's Notes:

I'm sorry for the long wait! I've had a crazy weekend and couldn't get logged in to post. Thank you for sticking with me. Thank you to our newest follower **StillDreamingOn**! Thanks for joining us!

See you all soon!.

10. Chapter 10

The back door of the club swung open with such a force that it bounced off the brick wall, clanging loud enough to deafen them. Three pairs of eyes swung around to see Ani storming out of the building, heels digging into the dirt. She was attempting to tie the belt of a leopard print robe but was failing in her anger. She gave up as she reached them, just pulling it over her breasts to cover herself as best as possible. Steve was the closest to her, and received the full force of her anger. Her hand pulled back behind her before connecting with his cheek in an open handed slap. Jonathan backed away in fear.

"Why is he here?! Why are you here?! What the fuck do you think you're doing bringing him out in public?" She was screeching and gesturing between the three of them, but couldn't control herself. "Do you have any idea what would happen if anyone recognizes him? He was safe. All you had to do was fucking play cards or watch tv for a few hours with him. Keep him occupied! Isn't that what I asked you to do?!"

She turned on Jonathan faster than she should have been able to in her shoes. She pushed one finger into his chest hard enough to leave a bruise. "I've already told Mike to let Nancy know where you three were tonight. I keep the walkie on me just in case. She's pissed and rightly so."

"What the fuck are you doing showing your tits to the married men of Hawkins?" Billy spoke in a deadly quiet tone. "When Doves Cry? What kind of fucked up shit is that?"

"It was the only way I could get over you. I played that record on repeat for days. I still do. It was the only way I could focus on the fact you were truly gone. I'm making money the only way I can. Was I supposed to pick people's pockets for the rest of my life? I haven't been inconspicuous since I turned sixteen! Not with these tits and not with this ass!" She grabbed both areas of her body for emphasis, drawing attention to the first time how rather round her ass truly was. Steve was going to need a new pair of pants soon. "And get your ass off my car!"

Billy jumped from the car as if burned. He looked between her and the car in disbelief. "This is a new car. How could you afford a new car? Are you fucking some geriatric for money too?"

"No, you stupid shit. I found a client who I could manipulate into giving me more money than I make in a week in tips. Private dances, moron. A rich older man pays me thousands for private dances. Sometimes in his home. Sometimes he throws parties and has me perform for his other rich friends."

"Whore."

The pain Steve felt couldn't be anywhere near how Billy must be feeling. Ani hit him square in the cheek with her tiny fist, his head whipped to one side. He slowly turned his eyes back to hers. They were darker than normal, even in the pale lighting of the parking lot. Ani was seething, struggling to keep herself covered. She waving her hands wildly as she screamed at him.

"If you *ever* dare speak to me that way again, I will kill you myself. I will make you feel every happiness you may have felt with me before. Then when the time is right, I will end your life. I'm big enough to take you, William Hargrove. You know I will do it. I can't work a regular job. Places like this pay only in tips. They don't ask for ID and social security numbers when you apply. I have myself, One, and Six to take care of when Six can't handle their bills. We all needed somewhere to live. That same client gave me not one, but two, nice homes to live in until he dies. That won't be any time soon and then I'll have to find another client to manipulate into giving me things I need. You weren't around anymore. I did what I had to do. My life ended when you left. I had no other options!"

"So you take your fucking bra off for money! Who are you? I never had an issue with you flirting with men when you were stealing from them, but this? After everything they did to you in that lab? This is embarrassing. I was fucking embarrassed these two just saw everything you've got! What part of me leaving allowed you to show other men what's mine?!"

"I am sure one day there will be a static saying that a certain amount of strippers are survivors of childhood rape. Today is not that day.

I'm not your property, William! I never was! I was your girl, not your fucking dog. I was not a play toy that you got sick of and threw away so no one else could have it. If you didn't want me anymore fine, but don't get mad when I do what I have to to survive. You're a selfish son of bitch. I wasn't about to starve on the streets because you left. You didn't even care. You came to where we were living, fucked me until I fell asleep, and then left in the middle of the night. No goodbye. Not one single nice word to let me know I still mattered. I couldn't get out of bed for two months. I barely showered. I lost fifteen pounds and cried myself to sleep any time I woke up. You left and never even told me you loved me. Four years together and not *once* did you say I love you. I only knew because I felt it coming from you. Every time you touched me, it was pouring through your skin. Your loser friends in California kept telling me 'We don't know where Billy found you, but after his mom, you were like a dream come true for him'. You were everything to me and you couldn't even say goodbye. You left like a coward. You proved everyone right that you didn't love me as much as I thought you did."

Billy threw his finished cigarette and walked slowly to where Ani stood. He wasn't sure if now the best time to do this, but after so long apart he was itching to touch Ani. He grabbed the front of her robe, pulling it tight around her. He gripped the belt and knotted it tightly around her waist. Reaching one hand behind her back and the other wrapped around her belt, he pulled her flush against him. Titling his head down, he noticed the heels she wore out a good five inches on her small frame. Locking eyes with her, he lowered his lips to her. When she didn't stop him, he pressed his lips to hers softly. She responded instantly, feeling his love coming through him into her. Ani wrapped her arms around his neck, gripping one hand in his hair, and opened her mouth to accept his tongue against her own. She raised herself up onto her tiptoes, pulling him closer. She could feel his arousal through his jeans, and her own pooled low in her stomach.

"Um, excuse me? Remember us?"

Ani pulled back from Billy's lips, but did not release her hold on him. His eyes were clouded over with lust, and his fingers on her lower back were confirming that point for her. She placed another kiss to

his lips, giggling when he didn't let her pull back quickly. When they finally pulled apart, he laid his forehead against hers. She could hear the other two fidgeting to the side. Sighing, she let go and took a step back.

"I'm not sorry. I have another dance to finish and I have to change. I'll see you guys back at the room."

She made it to the door before Billy called to her. "Stassi?"

"I know. But you still aren't forgiven for the other girls. I still want answers."

She turned the doorknob and disappeared inside.

The car ride back to the room was tense. Billy sat in the back, elbows on his knees and head in his hands. Steve looked in the rear view window at the other boy.

"Is it always like that?"

Billy sighed into his palms, "Worse sometimes. But she's never hit me that hard before. Slapped me, sure. But never punched me in the face. Fuck!"

Jonathan looked over the backseat and couldn't believe what he was seeing. Billy Hargrove was staring out of the window, tears running down his face.

"I knew something was different about her. She was too thin, she used to be curvy but still thin. She couldn't look me in my eyes when I woke up. Not really. She was looking at my forehead, you know?" Steve and Jonathan murmured their agreement. "Two months? Fuck! I didn't know. She's right. I never called. I never wrote her a letter. I didn't even try. I knew how to get a hold of her, and I just didn't. I was so fucking caught up in coming here and trying to get back on top that I couldn't take the time to check on her. I blamed her for us moving here. She feels differently than we do. She feels *stronger* to not mix her own emotions with everyone else. I didn't fucking know."

"Why would it be her fault you moved here?"

"My dad...he uh, he's violent. Worse than me. I'm his main target. When he started dating Susan, Ani would manipulate him into being calm and relaxed so he wouldn't go off on me anymore. She didn't want Max to see that. Then they got married and Ani was manipulating him too much to protect Max. If she does it for too long, it causes the opposite emotions to come out stronger and worse than before. He became convinced she was doing something to him. Here we are now."

"Can we ask about the rape situation?" Steve wasn't sure he should ask but knew it needed to be brought up.

"The male nurses, orderlies, they used her like a fucking toy from the time she was nine until they got out of there. She won't talk about it to anyone but Six. She gave me just enough to know. Fuck!" Billy punched the seat in front of him. "Fuck her for coming here. She should have let me fucking die! And fuck you two for taking me there!"

"Hey, asshole. We took you to be fucking nice since you were starting to be a fucking prick again. Max was worried you'd get depressed so we offered to do something to cheer you up. We fucking hate you too, you know." Steve shot him a dark look through the rear view. "And we didn't know she worked there or we wouldn't have gone."

Billy doubted after seeing them staring at his girl, that they wouldn't go back a second time.

11. Chapter 11

Author's Note: this is your only warning. This chapter has been rated M for sexual situations. There will be more in the future. I will *not* warn for the other chapters. I apologize if anyone is offended by certain things in this chapter. Please enjoy!

Ani walked into the motel room looking as if she had run a marathon. To make matters worse, seeing Steve, Jonathan, and Billy sitting at the table playing poker didn't help matters. She admitted to herself that it was nice to see him doing something normal. But the tension in the room could be cut with a knife. They looked up when she arrived and went back to breaking each other's balls without even greeting her. Oh this wouldn't do, not at all.

Smirking she walked to the dresser, bending at the waist. She felt three pairs of eyes on her as she reached deep into the drawer, ass high in the air. She pulled a fresh pair of silk shorts from the drawer, smiling widely as she came up. She looked over her shoulder to see Billy staring at her with his silent rage clear on his face.

"Don't mind me. Just want a quick shower. I had a *long* and *hot* night at work tonight." She wandered slowly to the bathroom, careful to not break the heels she purposely wore home from work.

She saw Billy motion to the other two out of the corner of her eyes. As she shut the bathroom door, she heard two sets of feet walk out of the door. She waited a moment before turning on the water and removing her clothes. Stepping under the stream she finally let herself feel the anger and guilt she had been holding back all night. She shouldn't have hit either boy, but she couldn't control herself. She also shouldn't have just provoked Billy, but after feeling the mixture of lust and rage coming off of him earlier, she couldn't help it. Bait Billy was her favorite game and it had been too long since they had played. She had a good night at work regardless of those three halfwits showing up. No matter how hurt she was, she and Billy were alone in this tiny room until it was time to go home. She might as well make the best of it. If he didn't make a move night, she'd amp up the game.

Her knuckles split open easily as her fist collided with the tile wall. Suppressing a sob, she held her hand under the water. She watched the water swirl red down the drain through tears. She hated rage crying but let herself feel her own emotions. She still wanted a man who couldn't have been bothered to check on in almost two years. He slept with other girls. She knew she was being stupid about that. They were broken up. She hadn't even really talked to him about it. Here she was thinking that she could make the best out of a shitty living situation. She should go back to California. She should tell Max she was going home. At the thought of Max, a pressure began to grow behind her eyes and traveled up into her brain.

What the fuck is that? It can't be...could it? The pressure wasn't going away. It felt as if someone or something was trying to be in her brain at the same time as she was. She knew this feeling. Shutting down her emotions, she focused on pushing the invading entity out of her mind. It was prodding around in her mind. It remembered her from all those years ago. She felt it looking for information on the kids, on her hapless cohorts, and lastly Billy. One last final mental shove pushed the Evil Nuisance from her mind. She needed to tell everyone what was happening, fast.

Ani turned to leave the shower, and collided with Billy's bare chest. She hadn't heard him enter the shower behind her. She wondered if he had seen her punch the tile. Ani raised her eyes to meet his, unsurprised to see the lust she felt when their skin touched. She took a step back, only to have him step forward. He was crowding her in a way that was familiar as well as foreign. Giving into her base instincts, she raised herself of her toes to press her lips to his. Billy responded instantly, sweeping his tongue along her lower lip, asking permission. She opened her mouth, running her tongue along his. She felt his hands grip her waist, pulling her flush against him. She felt his arousal against her hips. When she let a moan escape her throat, Billy's hands moved to her hips with lightening speed. He lifted her in the air, forcing her to wrap her legs around his waist. He pressed her against the cool tile of the shower, running kisses down her neck. She gasped when he nipped lightly at her pulse point.

"Tell me you don't want me and I'll put you down."

"If you don't shut up and fuck me, I'll go home and leave you here to rot."

His lips found their way to her ear. He licked along the shell of her ear, smiling when he felt her entire body shiver. He went to nip her ear, only to taste metal. Turning his head enough to look at her ear, he saw the dangling metal from her piercing.

"You still wear the other earring, baby?"

"I haven't taken it off, idiot. Now for fuck's sake, put your cock in me or I'll go finish myself off!"

Billy growled low in his throat before taking her lips again in a bruising kiss. He kept one hand wrapped under her bottom, while the other slide up the natural curves of her body. His hand found her breast, rolling her nipple between his fingers. He pulled back, dipping his head to take her other nipple in his mouth. Ani arched her back off the wall, feeling her own arousal begin to drip from her core. Her hands wrapped into his hair, pushing and pulling him at the same time. She was a moaning, writhing mess by the time he released her nipple with a pop. He looked up into her eyes with a smirk.

"I swear to God, Liam," she gasped at him. Before she could finish her sentence, the hand on her breast slide down her body. Suddenly, she felt Billy slide a finger into her. His head fell to rest against her chest.

"Fuck, Stassi. You're soaked." He began slowly dragging his finger in and out of her.

"*Please!*" She was begging now, but his lust and love coming through her core where his finger was driving her mad. It was too much. "I *feel* you. Please, Liam. Please."

His hand left her suddenly, and moved to grip her hip again. Lifting her slightly, he lined himself up with her center. Slowly he slide her down onto him, causing them both to moan. Ani braced her hands on his shoulders, lifting herself up and down on his shaft. She moved slow on purpose, knowing it would drive him crazy. It only took a few achingly slow bounces before his hands gripped her hips hard enough to bruise. He held her against the wall hard, snapping his

hips sharply against hers.

"You're so fucking tight, baby." Billy was moaning in her ear as gasps were escaping her own lips. He removed one hand from her hip, sliding in between them. His fingers rubbed her clit. "I've missed you. I love you."

Ani's orgasm hit her suddenly at his words. She screamed his name, gripping his shoulders with her nails. Her heels dig into his ass, causing him to stop inside her. He groaned at the feel of her gripping his length harder than she had been. He waited until pulsing around his cock stopped before attempting to move. Ani gripped his shoulder again.

"Put me down."

She was smiling at the anguish that ran across his face. Billy couldn't believe she had just used him to get off. This was new. She unwrapped her legs from his waist, and he lowered her gently to the floor. Before he could turn to walk away, she began lowering herself to her knees on the floor. He watched in awe as she gripped him in one hand, running her tongue from the base of his shaft to the tip. In one motion she slid his cock into her mouth, and had her lips wrapped around the base of him. He felt her throat against the head of his cock. Billy braced one hand on the wall in front of him, the other wrapped in her long hair. She bobbed up and down his length, running her teeth lightly along him every few strokes.

"Stassi, fuck. Baby, please. I'm going to cum."

Ani released his cock with a pop louder than he let out from her nipple. Smirking, she ran her tongue flatly along the vein on the underside of him. "Then cum for me....daddy."

If anything was going to do it for him, it was that. His balls tightened and he could barely watch her slide him right back in her mouth to swallow his seed. He snapped his hips as his climax hit him, gripping her hair tightly. She sucked and swallowed everything he gave her until nothing was left. When he was done, she stood before him under the still running shower. He pulled her to him, losing himself in her kisses. He could taste himself on her tongue, but for the first

time in a long time, he didn't mind. He felt her small hands on his chest, gently pushing him away.

"Come on, Liam. Let's go to bed." Ani turned around to shut the water off. After wrapping a towel around herself, she grabbed a second and knitted it around his waist. He followed her when she made her way to the bed. He felt himself grow hard again when she dropped her towel and crawled to the headboard. She turned to lay on her back, one leg bent up at the knee and slightly turned out. It was a beautiful sight.

"I thought I said let's go to bed." Ani smiled when he dropped his towel and crawled to lay his body over hers.

Author's Notes:

Hey everyone! I couldn't get this up for the past two days. I actually got a chemical burn on my eye putting chemicals in my pool two days ago. I was having trouble seeing and couldn't edit or proof read this. But here it is! I hope you enjoyed it.

Welcome to our newest followers: **vandecou** and **ILovePotatoes94**! Thanks for following! I hope you stick through because at the moment I don't know exactly how long this is going to end up being.

12. Chapter 12

Billy smiled sleepily at the top of Ani's head. She had fallen asleep with her head pressed against his chest. He shifted slightly to get comfortable, but was trapped under the leg she curled over his thighs. Giving up, he closed his eyes and drifted to sleep running the tips of his fingers up and down her back.

The pounding on the door woke them both suddenly. Billy glanced at the alarm clock on the table. He couldn't figure out who would be pounding on the door at this time of night. Ani pushed him back onto the bed, and grabbed one of his shirts from the next bed. She crept to the window next to the door while buttoning up to cover herself. Knowing how dangerous it was to even think about anything other than the door, he briefly admired the color of his favorite burgundy shirt against her tanned skin.

"Throw a pair of boxers on. It's Steve. He's got Max with him." She opened the door slightly, asking them to hold on while Billy got decent. She never took her eyes off his bare body. He swore he was blushing, and could tell she probably was too. After all, they essentially just got caught with their pants down.

"Harrington, that really you out there?" Billy called while looking for his boxers in the mess on the bed.

"Yeah, it's me. Don't cream your pants."

Ani waited until Billy was covered before opening the door wide. When she turned to let them in, she let out a stream of curses that made Billy blush.

"Turn on the fucking light, Liam. Do it now!" He reached over and flipped the switch, illuminating the room.

Max didn't walk in so much as get drug in by Ani. Billy pushed the clothes off the bed, and onto the floor. Ani set the younger girl down in the second bed, holding her face in her hands. She turned her head from side to side, holding back tears. She looked up at Billy, jerking her head for him to come over. Billy sucked in a breath when he took

in the deep purple bruise forming around her right eye.

"I called Dustin, who called Steve. He came and got me. I snuck out like you taught me for when things got bad with Neil." Max was choking out the words through tears. "He came home drunk. He kept going on and on about how Billy was dead and now he was left with a daughter didn't even want. That as much of a fuck up as Billy was, at least he was a boy and *his*. He started going off about how he let Billy spend too much time with that little slut from the prep school. I couldn't listen to him talk about you, Ani. So, I don't know. I... I just started yelling at him."

Ani wrapped her arms around Max, sitting down next to her on the bed. She closed her eyes, shushing Max and rocking her. She let Max cry until she fell asleep. Billy stepped in and carefully moved his stepsister to the head of the bed, watching quietly as Ani tucked her in. When she looked up, her eyes were steel grey and he could see the rage in them. He knew she could feel it coming off him.

"Thank you, Harrington. I appreciate you bringing her here."

"Hey, man. I'm an only child. But I figured....well I figured you weren't all that bad when it came to that kid. I get why you were so pissed when you moved here. I can see a huge difference in you now." Steve looked at Ani. "It's her freaking out I'm more worried about."

Ani was staring down at Max, stroking the redhead's hair. She lightly ran her fingers over the bruise, before grasping Max's hand in her own. Her eyes shut and Billy knew what she was doing.

"Stassi, wait. Don't!" She waved her hand at him in a shushing motion. Billy looked at Steve, both with clenched jaws.

"Go outside. There's smokes on the table." The two boys did as they were told. They kept the door propped open and were watching through the crack. Neither spoke.

Finally, Ani calmly opened her eyes. Steel grey had turned to a dark, stormy hue, and she sucked in a deep breath. Reaching over to the

table, she dialed a phone number without looking at it. She spoke quietly to whoever answered, and nodded with a tight smile when she said her goodbyes. She leaned down and kissed Max's head, fiddling with the blankets before walking outside. She took the cigarette from Billy's mouth, inhaling deeply. When she let out the smoke, Ani slumped against the wall next to the door.

She couldn't look Billy in the face right now. She couldn't tell him what she had seen or felt. She could still feel Max's pain and terror, and knew looking him in the eye would cause the tears to fall. She finished his cigarette and calmly took the second he lit and offered her. Steve watched in fascination as the two of them moved closer together without making it obvious. He supposed the time they had together had made them have all sorts of unspoken codes, rules, and mannerisms with each other. He watched as Billy lifted his empty hand to push the brunette hair out of Ani's face. She shifted away from his touch for a moment, her lips twitching in a frown around her smoke. He swore he saw rejection on his nemesis's face, but it was gone before he could be sure. This was not the guy who came to Hawkins two years ago. This was a guy who still had the confidence of the guy he knew, but a tender spot for the spitfire who came to save him.

"I felt it tonight. That thing you guys call The Mind Flayer. I was selfish and angry that you guys came to the club tonight and saw me. I thought I should tell Maxi I was heading home to Cali. I was going to turn tail and go. The second her name crossed my mind, I felt it poking around. It was sudden and unpleasant. It knows who all of you are. It knows Billy's body has been found and his mind returned to it. It remembers me from before."

"Whoa, before? Like you've fought this thing in the past?"

Ani looked at Steve, blowing smoke out of the side of her lips. "When I was 8. A bunch of us kids fought it. It's different for you guys. You have *one* kid with abilities. There were seven of us. We thought we killed it. We closed the portal too. But when we closed it, it opened one here. That's why the lab got so business over here. That's why Brenner came here from California."

Billy tossed his smoke into the parking lot. "What do we, Stassi?"

Whatever you need, I'll take care of it."

"Simmer down, GI Joe. It wants to finish you. It hates that you essentially beat it. I already made the call."

"When will they be here?"

"Who? Who's coming? What the hell is going on?"

Ani smiled sinisterly at Steve, "My brother and sister in law."

Max awoke from a nightmare a few hours later. Ani was sleeping next to her in the bed. She got up and went to use the bathroom. When she came back, Billy was awake. He was sitting up in bed, watching Ani sleep. Max sat down near her stepbrother's feet, startling him.

"Forgot you were here, kid."

"Easy to forget me when she's here." Max tipped her chin at the sleeping woman. "I'm glad she came. I'm glad she brought you back. I'm sorry I interrupted your night, Billy. I didn't mean to. I know how much you missed Ani. I thought Steve would take me to Mrs. Beyers to stay with El. He didn't even ask me, he just drove over here."

"Look, Maxine. I didn't want a kid sister. I was good on my own. But you aren't that bad. We didn't have too hard a time together before we moved. I was just so angry that I had to leave her. It wasn't your fault and I took it out on you. Then you met those kids and made real friends, and I only got madder."

"I know you hate Lucas."

"I don't hate that kid, Maxi. I hate that you found someone you like and who likes you. I couldn't even tell Ani I loved her until tonight." He looked thoughtfully at Max. "You've grown up, kid. I'm proud of you. You protected your friends at the mall as best as you could. Hell, you swung a bat with nails at my Johnson after you drugged me. You don't get that from your mom. You got that from spending time with Stassi. Don't lose that. You're going to need it."

"It's back, isn't it?"

Billy nodded, a yawn escaping his mouth. He patted the bed next to him. Max climbed up next to him, putting her head on his shoulder. "I should have been a better brother. I'm sorry. Maybe once she finds a way to get rid of this thing once and for all, the three of us can go home. Or we find a way to get rid of Neil."

Max was already asleep before Billy could finish his train of thought. Laying his head back against the headboard, he closed his eyes and drifted to sleep. Ani smiled, her eyes wide and brimming with unshed tears. Maybe they would all go home

Max would spend the rest of the summer at the Beyers house. Joyce had welcomed the redhead in without complaint and was grateful there were two other women to help around the house. She loved her boys but they really were boys. She was even grateful for Billy's ex-girlfriend for stopping by to speak with her privately about the situation in the Hargrove home. With Hopper gone, Joyce had to pick up the pieces of her life quickly. But she was a mother, and would take in another child that needed a good home if necessary.

The young woman had provided a good ear to talk to about her pain. She felt remarkably calmer when the young woman said goodbye. She felt lighter now that she spoke to someone who would understand what it was like to lose your first love. Hopper may not have been anything more, but she had loved him since they were kids.

This was their life now. A jumbled mess of her own kids, mixed with their friends whom she seemed to have unofficially adopted. She understood the insane, unbelievable things they had all experienced. What she couldn't understand was the nagging feeling that something was coming again. And it had everything to do with the young woman sitting at her kitchen table, drinking coffee with her.

"Ani, can I ask you something?"

"Sure, Mrs. Byers. Anything you want."

"Are you like El? Can you...*do* things?"

Ani choked on her coffee, setting the mug down as gently as possible. "Well...when you ask it like that. Yes, m'am. I can't do what El does. The kids told me. But I can do other things. I can feel people's emotions, by touch or through the space around them. Touch is always easier. I can get a clear read by touch. Also, I can touch people or objects and see past experiences. I have a twin. He can see people's lives. All of it. Beginning to end. He can also do this thing where he can track someone through space and time. That's how I found Billy. He tracked him down for me."

"So Billy Hargrove isn't...he's not...?"

Ani sighed, realizing her mistake. "No, m'am. He's alive. He was just...separated from his physical body for a while. The body they pulled from the mall wasn't his. It was a clone made by The Flayer. That's what that thing does. Separates your conscious from your physical body so it can walk around as you to create it's army. What it did to Will...I never saw it do that in California. It's picked up some tricks in the past ten years."

Joyce picked up her cup and moved to the sink. She began washing the dishes with her head down. She felt Ani's hand on her shoulder. Without looking at the young woman, she asked if it would come back for Will.

"No, Mrs. Beyers. It wants me."

Author's Note:

Hey everyone! Thanks for joining me again today! I hope you like this one! I want to show Billy in a different light and I hope that's clear. He's still an asshole but Ani brings out the best parts of him.

Welcome to our newest follower: **HarleyQuinn5232**! Love the name!

Vandecou: I'm glad you enjoyed it. Once I started it I couldn't stop. There will be a lot more of that in the near future so stay tuned!

13. Chapter 13

Pre-Chapter Note: there is an unsettling bit of violence in this chapter. It's important for later on. If it makes you uncomfortable I'm sorry. I don't think skipping the section will effect the rest of the story for you later on but I'm not sure yet. Please don't hate me or flood me with hate mail for this. So again, I'm sorry ahead of time.

"Dingus, your model is here for you," Robin's voice carried through the back room in a gleefully spiteful tone. The door clicked shut behind her as she turned to go back to the sales floor.

Steve knew he should have never told her about the dreams he had of Ani the past few nights. But honestly, Robin was his only friend near his age that would giggle and judge to his face and not behind his back. She also wouldn't stop asking who Ani was after meeting her days ago. Rolling his eyes, he got up from rewinding returned VHS tapes and moved to the door to the lobby. He spotted Ani near the counter in her boots and shorts again.

Ani smirked at something Robin said to her before patting the taller girl's hand and waving goodbye. She moved to the door and slipped past Steve, brushing against him slightly. The dreams would happens again tonight whether he wanted them to or not. The calm that washed over him was instantly unwanted, warning bells triggered in his mind.

"You can stop that. I know you're manipulating me again. I know every time you do it."

Big blue eyes met his instantly, wide with shock. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize you could tell. I was hoping you would just count my presence in this shit hole store as the new source of relaxation you've felt. Fuck, I need to find new techniques with you."

If his eyes rolled further back in his head they would get stuck. Steve sighed impatiently before gesturing for Ani to take the chair at the table he was working at. He waited until she spoke before moving from his spot.

"It's happening tonight."

Steve dropped the tape he was holding and turned to the woman next to him. Thoughts of what exactly could happen ran through his mind. "As in? You're going to go after the Flayer? Or Neil? Or that doctor guy."

"Neil. I'm going after Neil. Tonight. Max is safely with Joyce and I know Joyce won't let her leave the house until I tell her it's safe. I have everything I need already. My brother and sister-in-law will be here in a few hours and then we're going to go take care of that piece of shit. I need you to watch Billy tonight. No field trips. I don't want Nancy there when I tell him what happened. I've known him long enough to know he won't take this well. Regardless of what he's done to him, and now Max, Billy loves his dad. He already lost his mother, losing his dad for good will be heartbreaking for him."

Steve nodded, "Of course. Do you really need to tell him though? Won't that make it worse?"

"I won't lie to him," Ani hissed at him. "Do you not know how relationships work? Trust. If I tell him right away it will start the grieving process faster. I have never once lied to him. Not in all the years we've been together. Did I hide stuff? Yes and yes, that's a form of lying. But I have never once done something this huge and not told him. Fuck, I have lied to him, haven't I? Don't answer that."

Ani stood from the chair and reached a hand over to Steve's. He tried to pull away before their skin connected but he wasn't fast enough. The second their hands met, he knew she would know about his dreams. He watched as her pupils blew wide and her mouth opened a fraction in shock.

Steve ran his lips down her stomach until he met the top of red lace panties. Hooking his fingers over the edge of the garment, he slowly slide them down her legs and tossed it over his shoulder. Grinning wickedly at her, Steve lowered his mouth to Ani's wet core before running his tongue lightly over her clit. Her moans and pleads for him to not stop filled the room.

Ani yanked her hand back from Steve as if burnt. She closed her eyes

momentarily and slammed her hands palm down on the table in front of her. When she opened her eyes, Steve saw they were the deepest shade of grey he'd ever seen them. He backed away instantly in fear at the smile on her face.

"I tried to get my hand away from you. I'm sorry. It was a dream. Just a dream. I'm sorry."

Ani lifted a hand to point a finger at him, "Stop speaking. I will tell Billy. I will call Jonathan and see if he can help you tonight. You'll need it. Get ice before you come over. If you think Billy is bad with controlling himself, you haven't seen anything yet. You're dead, Harrington. You didn't have my permission to think about me like that. Liam isn't the only one who can fight." Her opened hand connected with his cheek before Steve could process what happened. His head whipped to one side and stars exploded behind his closed eyes.

And that's how Steve Harrington came to realize that Anastasia was not all she had been cracking up to be.

"He *what*?!" Billy snarled, his body caging Ani against the wall. His hands wrapped around her arms in a bruising hold. "What the fuck did you see from his dreams?! You begging him? Is that where you go during the day sometimes? It's not just supply runs, is it? You're fucking Harrington behind my back. I knew it. You're a fucking whore. I moved here against my will and you become a slut."

Ani pointedly looked down at his hands before raising her eyes to meet his. He had never put his hands on her in anger, and it was pushing her over the edge. If he didn't let go, there would be more than regretful words being passed between them.

"You will let go of me right now, William. I don't know who you think you are. This is not how we treat each other. You used to love that all your friends wanted a piece of me. You loved the power it gave you to have someone everyone else wanted. I'm not fucking Harrington. I said take your fucking hands off me this instant."

She didn't see the hand coming before it connected with her cheek.

Her head snapped to the side and she held it there. Tears filled her eyes before the fear and sadness gripped her heart. It took just a minute before she realized she had slapped Billy, Steve, and a few others in the same manner. The guilt was worse than the pain blooming across her face. Before she could react, his hand wrapped tightly around her arm again, squeezing. He pulled her toward him before slamming her back into the wall. Her head collided with the wall, pain radiating across her cheek and the back of her head. As she turned her face back to Billy, the knock on the door startled both of them.

"Fuck you. Let go." His hands instantly dropped from her body and he stepped back from her. And looked up into his face and saw the shock and regret in his eyes. "Don't you fucking come near me ever again."

Ani opened the door to find Jonathan and Steve on the other side. Two sets of eyes took in the hand print on her cheek before pushing past her into the room. Ani calmly shut the door behind them and watched as Steve picked Billy up by the front of his shirt before holding him in place with his arm pressed against Billy's neck.

"You hit her? What the fuck is wrong with you, Hargrove? You really fucking are your father, aren't you? You don't deserve her."

Billy licked his lower lip in confidence the way he had millions of times before. "And you do? You don't know a thing about her. You don't know how much of a manipulative bitch she is, even without her powers. You don't know a goddamn thing. She doesn't need a fucking pretty boy protector and his new sidekick coming in to save her. Look at her. Barely wearing clothes. Stripping for money. Sure she's hot. But she's not fucking special. She could have hit me right back. It's not like she hasn't slapped me when I've deserved it. Isn't that right, Stassi?"

"If you don't see her as a fucking masterpiece, let her go. Someone would kill to be with her. Regardless of what she does to survive. I have seen you look at her like she's a goddess, which honestly she is. I have also seen you speak to her like she's trash, and we all now she isn't. Despite you, she survived on her own. She's smart. She's gorgeous. And she's manipulative, sure. But it makes her Ani and if

you can't see what's right in front of you, let her go. She came here to save you. She loves you regardless of *your* flaws. Keep her here is only holding her back from being with someone who hears waves crashing when she walks in the room. Someone who sees her and knows the rest of their day is going to be as wonderful as she is. She brought you back from imminent death and you don't ever appreciate her." Jonathan's words were quiet and clear as he threw them over his head. He had stepped back to her side, tilting her head to look closely at her face as she had with Max. Tears filled her eyes when he gently probed the back of her head. His eyes met hers and she felt his concern for her. She smiled hesitantly at him before stepping around him.

"You have never once laid a hand on me in anger. You're lucky they showed up because I swear on my brother, I am so close to ending your life tonight. The room is paid for for the next three weeks. I'm going to see if Joyce will allow me to crash at her house as well. Fuck you, Billy. You're better than your father. I should have known you were going to turn on me eventually. Let him go, Steve. He isn't worth it." Ani knew her final words would hit home. Billy's face turned an ugly shade of purple and he let out a strangled gasp as Steve dropped his hold.

"Stassi, please," Billy reached a hand out to grip her finger. She jerked her hand away from him, not wanting to feel his emotions.

"You can stay at my place. My parents will be gone for another two months. They left again today. I have the room."

Ani nodded her thanks at Steve, moving around the room to grab her bag and throw her things inside it. As she located her shampoo in the bathroom, she caught sight of the bruise forming across her cheek. The anger in her spiked again. She took a deep breath before focusing on Billy in the next room. She sent fear and sadness at him in retaliation. When she was finished, she moved back to the bedroom and placed the bags by the door.

"I'll come back when *I am ready*. You will *not* contact Max without my say so. I'll be speaking to her about this too. I don't want you near her." Ani watched as Steve took her keys and grabbed her bags to place them in her car. "I'm going to see your father tonight, you piece

of shit. All of this, and I'm still going to go take care of the man who made this pathetic boy I've wasted my whole life wanting. My brother will be here soon. When they come, you send them to Harrington's. Good luck dealing with One."

Ani walked out of the door, ignoring Billy's pleas for her to return. She took her keys from Steve and waited until he slid in the passenger side. She drove off in silence.

Ok so I'm so sorry about the long wait. I honestly didn't have time or motivation for the longest time. I want to thank our newest followers and favorites. There have been so many and I don't even know where to begin on mentions. I'll try to get them in next chapter. It's just late where I'm at and I wanted to get this up ASAP.

Also, if anyone is offended by this chapter I am sorry. It's crucial to the next few chapters and the ending as well. Ani isn't a forgiving woman and this is something that will test our lovers. It will get better. I promise.